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THE
EVANGELICAL REVIVAL

AND OTHER SERMONS:

WITH AN ADDRESS ON THE
WORK OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY IN A
PERIOD OF THEOLOGICAL DECAY
AND TRANSITION.

BY
R. W. DALE,
Birmingham.

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PREFACE.

THE sermon on the Evangelical Revival—the first in this volume—was preached to my own congregation last summer while the Wesleyan Methodist Conference was holding its annual meetings in Birmingham. Several Wesleyan ministers who happened to be present urged me to print it; but more than half of the sermon was preached from rough notes, and just then I was too busy to write it in full.

It occurred to me lately that I had preached during the last eighteen months a considerable number of sermons on subjects related more or less closely to the history and present position of Evangelicalism—sermons intended to illustrate and enforce truths to which I thought that Evangelicalism had given insufficient prominence, or sermons intended to re-assert truths which were the strength of Evangelicalism in its victorious years, but which have lately,

in some quarters, been sinking into neglect. These I now venture to publish.

It is possible that many persons may think that I have exaggerated the extent to which the theological theories of the Evangelical leaders have been surrendered by modern Evangelicals ; and it is not possible to give definite proofs that my opinion on this point is correct. But in all parts of the country it seems to me that there is theological restlessness. I constantly meet with men who hold the substance of the Evangelical Faith, but who declare themselves dissatisfied with the intellectual representation of it, which has become a tradition in Evangelical Churches. I think, too, that there are the clearest signs that even those who stand fast by the Evangelical definitions of the last century are not likely to have many successors.

If these impressions are correct, nothing is to be gained by reticence. The policy of reserve in relation to religious truth is always pernicious, and it is especially pernicious in a time like the present. The difficulties of younger ministers are enormously and cruelly increased if they are left to fight their battles alone, and if, in their struggle with forms of theological thought, which are still tenaciously held by some persons in their congregations, they are left without the support which they would receive from

a frank criticism by men older than themselves of the opinions which they feel obliged to renounce.

The position of those who are now entering upon ministerial work with a perfect faith in Christ, and with an earnest desire to be loyal to Him, is, on many accounts, difficult and perplexing. They have the strongest claims to generous sympathy. If my judgment on the present position of theological thought in Evangelical Churches is sound, they are breaking into new oceans, whose shores and rocks and currents have never been laid down in human charts; they must steer by the sun and the stars. I trust that they will not think me presumptuous for having offered them the suggestions contained in the Address on "The Work of the Christian Ministry in a Period of Theological Decay and Reconstruction."

R. W. DALE.

BIRMINGHAM,

September 7th, 1880.

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I.

THE EVANGELICAL REVIVAL.¹

We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work Thou didst in their days.—PSALM xliv. 1.

THE sessions of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference now being held in this town must have led many of us during the last few days to look back upon that great Evangelical Revival, of which Wesleyan Methodism is the most conspicuous monument and memorial.

The story of the Revival is not told in the New Testament, but you and I do not suppose that Divine words and acts are Divine because they happen to be recorded in the Holy Scriptures ; they were recorded in the Holy Scriptures because they were Divine. It is not the Book that makes the great achievements of God wonderful and sacred ; the achievements give to the Book which contains the record of them its wonderful and sacred character. And we believe in the Living God who “fainteth not, neither is He weary.” The Divine power and mercy and righteousness did not cease to reveal themselves in human history at

¹ Preached in Carr's Lane Chapel, Sunday evening, July 27, 1879, during the meetings of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference in Birmingham.

the close of the first century. The Acts of the Apostles is an historical fragment. When Luke laid it aside, the story he was telling was still going on ; it had only just begun. The literary form of the book suggests that it is nothing more than the introduction to a great history. The materials for continuing it have been growing in every succeeding generation. Among the most remarkable of these materials are those which have been contributed by that movement which rescued England in the last century from the peril of atheism and has profoundly affected the religious life of the English race throughout the world.

Within the last three or four weeks we have had the advantage of receiving from Mr. Gladstone a keen and sympathetic review of the parentage of the Evangelical movement, its progress and its issues. Before stating my own views of what the Revival accomplished and of what it failed to accomplish, I should like to say something on one or two of the more remarkable points in Mr. Gladstone's article. The article appears in the current number of "*The British Quarterly Review*."¹

As illustrating the religious condition of England when the Revival began, Mr. Gladstone says—

"That the preaching of the Gospel a hundred years ago had disappeared, not by denial, but by lapse, from the majority of

¹ I find it convenient in publishing this sermon to make the quotations, not direct from "*The British Quarterly Review*" (July, 1879), but from vol. vii. of Mr. Gladstone's "*Gleanings of Past Years*."

Anglican pulpits, is, I fear, in large measure, an historic truth" (p. 207).

He describes the Evangelical movement as

"A strong, systematic, outspoken, and determined reaction against the prevailing standards both of life and preaching. It aimed at bringing back, on a large scale, and by an aggressive movement, the Cross, and all that the Cross essentially implies, both into the teaching of the clergy, and into the lives as well of the clergy as of the laity" (p. 207).

He adds—

"Whether they [*i.e.*, the Evangelical leaders] preached Christ in the best manner may be another question ; but of this there is now, and can be, little question that they preached Christ ; they preached Christ largely and fervently, where, as a rule, He was but little and but coldly preached before" (pp. 207, 208).

He reminds us that while Wesley holds a great and unique place in the parentage of the movement, much of its specific character, as it affected both the English Church and the Evangelical Nonconformists, was stamped upon it by Whitfield, whose powers and success as a preacher were unrivalled ; by Hervey, the author of the "Meditations," which, forty years ago, was still a popular book among Evangelicals both inside and outside the Establishment ; by John Berridge, who wrote "The Christian World unmasked," which, as I remember very well, had a place on my father's shelves near to the "Meditations ;" by Romaine, whose "Life of Faith" is another of the books which I read when I was a boy, and which I have not often seen since, except in the obscure recesses of second-hand book-shops—those silent and

dreary, yet fascinating cemeteries of dead literature ; and by Toplady, who is known to most of us by his great hymn, " Rock of ages, cleft for me." These were the spiritual fathers of the Evangelical school.

Mr. Gladstone is right in maintaining that the Evangelical party never became actually dominant in the English Church. Till the close of the reign of George III. he thinks that the Evangelical clergy did not exceed one in twenty of the whole clerical body. At the close of the reign of George IV. he believes that they may have risen to one in eight. They became still more numerous in later years ; but they never secured ascendancy at the universities, or on the episcopal bench, or among the dignified clergy generally, or in the great Church Societies, such as the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. In many of the great towns—happily in Birmingham among the number—the Evangelicals have had great strength. Mr. Gladstone does not mention Birmingham, but mentions Carlisle, Hull, Huddersfield, Leicester, and Cheltenham ; he also mentions some minor centres of influence, such as Eton, Windsor, and Gloucester. Liverpool became largely Evangelical through the influence of the late Dr. MacNeile, but there was only one Evangelical clergyman in the town, till in 1814 and 1816 Mr. Gladstone's father introduced two more.

Individual clergymen, like Charles Simeon of Cambridge, and Daniel Wilson of Islington, were con-

spicuous. There were several well-known proprietary chapels in London occupied by Evangelicals ; but during the first third of this century—that is, up to the time that the Tractarian movement began—there was not a single London parish west of Temple Bar in the hands of the Evangelical party. The Evangelical clergy, as Mr. Gladstone contends, have always been in a minority ; and I remember that seven or eight years ago Mr. Ryle himself, who would not be disposed to under-estimate their number, claimed for his party not more than one-fifth, or at most one-fourth, of the clergy.

But their influence was out of proportion to their numerical strength ; and Mr. Gladstone ascribes to the Evangelical movement the revival of religious earnestness and fervour among those of the clergy who never became Evangelical. There can be no doubt that the zeal of the English Church is incomparably greater to-day, and has been incomparably greater during the last thirty years, than it was a century ago ; and this change Mr. Gladstone traces to the Evangelical movement.

When he proceeds to say that he regards Tractarianism as not only inheriting the impulse of the revival of the last century, but as aiming to complete the work of the leaders of the revival,¹ I venture to differ from him. No doubt the Evangelical fire has spread ; it burns now on other altars than those which

¹ Pp. 221, seq.

are built on the Evangelical model—altars served by priests in strange vestments and celebrating strange rites. They caught their fire from the altars at which our Evangelical fathers ministered and on which it fell direct from heaven; but that the “priests” of to-day are completing the work of the “Evangelists” of a hundred years ago does not seem clear. To my mind the work is being undone.

It is true, and we thank God for it, that many Tractarian preachers—or, as they are now called, Ritualists—are as fervent in their religious life as the most fervent of the Evangelicals. Their sermons, if they had been preached in the middle of the last century, would have provoked as much anger and scorn as the sermons of Whitfield and Wesley. They have very much of the spirit—the ardent, vehement, enthusiastic spirit—which swept forward the Evangelical movement; and the power of their preaching is largely derived from some of those great positive truths which were incessantly reiterated by the Evangelical leaders. Ritualistic Mission services are said to recall very much that used to characterise the early missions of Methodism.

All this, I say, is true, and yet it does not prove that Ritualism is the completion of the Evangelical Revival. Every great religious movement has its negative as well as its positive elements, and the negative elements are not less essential, not less characteristic, than the positive. The polemic of St. Paul against the Judaizers is an illustration of what I

mean. The Judaizers acknowledged that men are saved by faith in Christ, but the force of this acknowledgment was broken by their assertion of the permanent authority of the institutions of the ancient law. It was not enough to say that men are saved by faith ; the Gospel of St. Paul was incomplete until he added " not of works ; " the negation was the only guarantee of the positive truth. His enemies confessed that salvation came from Christ ; St. Paul had something more to say : he had to maintain—and this was his great offence—that when men who preached Christ, no matter with what earnestness, went on to affirm that if heathen men were to secure eternal salvation they must observe the ceremonies of Judaism, this was a different gospel from that which he preached, and was, in fact, no gospel at all.

The chief work of the Reformers of the sixteenth century was to reassert the negations of St. Paul, and to add to these some other negations which were rendered necessary by the corruptions and falsehoods of the Romish Church—corruptions and falsehoods which were grosser than those of the Judaizers of the first century. The positive truths contained in the original creed of the Church had never been lost. Even in the worst and darkest times earnest Romanists had preached the death of Christ as the ground of the forgiveness of sins, the necessity of faith in Christ as the condition of eternal redemption, the necessity of the regeneration of our nature by the power of the Holy Spirit, and the obligation resting

on Christian men to do the will of God. But these regal truths had been surrounded with such enormous and portentous errors that their power had been impaired and almost destroyed; and the errors had to be denied at the peril of breaking up the unity of Christendom.

The Evangelicals also have been entrusted with negations as well as with positive truths. Ritualism, though it retains many of the positive truths, suppresses the negations, and even violently denounces them. The Evangelical affirms that men are justified by faith, not by works. When the Ritualist says, "By faith, and also by works," he destroys the Evangelical doctrine of Justification. The Evangelical declares that through Christ the guiltiest of our race may have direct access to God, that no priest should come between God and the individual soul, that as soon as a man confesses his sins, forsakes them, and appeals to the Divine mercy, God Himself will forgive. When the Ritualist teaches that if men repent and break with their evil ways and believe in Christ, God will forgive, but that the priest is authorised to receive confession and to pronounce absolution, the Evangelical Gospel is corrupted and perverted, and the sacred prerogatives of the race for which Christ died—the Just for the unjust to bring us to God—are obscured and suppressed. The Evangelical believes in the Real Presence of Christ among those who are assembled in Christ's name, and denies sacramentalism. The Ritualist also believes in the Real Presence; but he teaches that the

Real Presence of Christ is not ours in its most august form until the bread and the wine of the Lord's Supper are made the body and blood of Christ at the awful moment when the words of consecration are pronounced by the lips of a priest ; and this is to bring back the gloomy superstitions and the destructive tyranny which made the religious life of Europe desolate for many centuries.

The truths which both the Ritualists and the Evangelicals preach are truths which have been held by universal Christendom. There is nothing in them to give to a religious movement a distinctive character. The earnestness which has inspired both Ritualists and Evangelicals is the spirit which has inspired all the leaders of great spiritual revivals—Ignatius Loyola as well as John Wesley, St. Bernard as well as George Whitfield ;—this earnestness cannot ascertain the innermost tendency and quality either of Evangelicalism or of Ritualism.

I think I see as clearly as any man that Evangelicalism is an incomplete movement ; but to complete it, its characteristic negations as well as its positive truths must be loyally preserved. The negations of Evangelicalism demonstrate that the Evangelical Revival was the direct heir of the Protestant Reformation ; and the rejection, the vehement scornful rejection, of these negations by the Ritualists is a decisive proof that, instead of aiming to complete the Revival, they are promoting a sacerdotal or Romish reaction. To this reaction all who claim to inherit

the traditions of Evangelicalism are bound to offer a stubborn resistance, which will refuse to listen to any terms of compromise, and which will dare to disturb and even to dissolve the most venerable institutions in which the reaction may find shelter and support. There were reasons enough forty years ago, when the Evangelical party appeared to be rising to ascendancy, why all who were penetrated with the spirit of the Evangelical Revival should look with suspicion and even with hostility upon the politico-ecclesiastical establishment of this country ; the reasons are indefinitely multiplied and strengthened in our own time ; for it has become apparent that the Establishment is the stronghold of sacerdotalism.

Mr. Gladstone is not unaware of the perils of the Oxford school.

"Their distinctive speech," he says, "was of Church and Priesthood, of Sacraments and Services, as the vesture under the varied folds of which the form of the Divine Redeemer was to be exhibited to the world ; in a way capable of, and suited for, transmission by a collective body from generation to generation" (p. 223).

He adds, in a characteristic and beautiful sentence, which I trust that the devout men of the party will lay to heart—

"It may well have happened that, in straining to secure for their ideas what they thought their due place, some, at least, among their disciples may have forgotten or disparaged that personal and experimental life of the human soul with God, which profits by all ordinances, but is tied to none, dwelling ever, through all its varying moods, in the inner court of the sanctuary, whereof the walls are not built with hands" (p. 223).

It is the conviction of Evangelical Nonconformists that, though this danger may be overcome by the nobler and loftier souls whose sanctity has attracted the sympathy and reverence of Mr. Gladstone as it attracts our own, the whole tendency of the movement is to conceal under a cumbrous and gorgeous vesture the heavenly form of Him who, when once He is seen, inspires all hearts with awe and wonder, with love and trust, and that, through its unwise zeal for the dignity and sacredness of a priestly order and a visible sanctuary, it imperils the truth that the commonalty of the Church are a royal priesthood and living stones in the true temple of God.

It was not in the Anglican Church in which it originated, that the Evangelical movement was to find its permanent home. Its great achievements and its most enduring monuments are to be found elsewhere. Wesleyan Methodism is its most remarkable and conspicuous creation. A hundred years have not passed since the death of John Wesley—the Conference is now holding only its 136th assembly—and all over England, in crowded towns and in lonely hamlets, there are the visible proofs of the energy, the zeal, and the success of “the people called Methodists ;” nor is there any country so remote to which Englishmen have penetrated in which you will not find a Methodist chapel and a Methodist class-meeting. To estimate the strength of Methodism you must include the members of the various communities

which have at different times seceded from the parent society, but which preserve not only the traditions and spirit, but the characteristic institutions of the original movement. In the United States its triumphs have been even more astonishing than in this country. At the last census, out of the total religious accommodation provided by all Churches, which was for a little more than nineteen millions of persons, the Methodists provided more than six millions and a quarter. The Baptists, the next most powerful community, provided only four millions ; the Presbyterians, rather more than two millions ; the Roman Catholics, rather less than a million and a half ; Congregationalists, rather less than a million ; Episcopalians, 850,000. Methodism has planted itself in France, in Italy, and in other countries on the European continent. It has missions to the heathen in every part of the world, and these missions are sustained with a noble persistency and vigour.

But all the results of the Evangelical Revival are not appropriated by the Methodist Societies. The English Nonconformists at the beginning of the last century were losing their courage and their earnestness. The clergy ejected in 1662 had disappeared, and the fervours of Puritanism had disappeared with them. Dr. Doddridge and his contemporaries wrote desponding pamphlets about "The Decay of the Dissenting Interest." Most of the Independents and the Baptists retained the Evangelical creed, but a keen east wind of rationalism was chilling the very

life both of ministers and people. Latitudinarianism and religious indifference were spreading through the English Church, and the Evangelical Nonconformists suffered from the infection. The Presbyterians were rapidly drifting into Unitarianism.

When the Evangelical Revival began most of our fathers regarded it with distrust. The ministers of our Churches were grave and learned men—more learned than most of their successors in these times—and they were scandalised by the illiteracy of many of the early Methodist preachers. John Wesley was a scholar as well as a man of genius, but a great part of the work of the Revival was done by men who left the plough and the forge to preach the Gospel, and though they preached with glorious success, the zeal of many of them was out of all proportion to their knowledge. Whitfield was a great orator; he had been at Oxford, but he was no scholar and a very indifferent theologian. His ways seemed almost as outrageous to our cautious and critical ecclesiastical ancestors as the ways of many of the lay evangelists. His passion and his tears, his vehemence, his popular eloquence, his audacity, his rapid movements from one part of the country to another, disturbed and shocked them. We Independents—we ministers, I mean—are still a quiet people, not easily excited. We are reserved. We shrink from eccentricities. We are rather ashamed when we are mastered by emotion. We want to serve God “with the spirit,” but we are especially

anxious to serve Him "with the understanding also." Our venerable fathers—fine, vigorous men in their way—had all these qualities in a higher degree than ourselves.

The people were like the ministers. They came to Meeting on Sunday to be taught—not to be thrilled by the joy or awed by the reverence of the worship—not to be excited or soothed or charmed by the eloquence of the preacher. They were theologians, and understood the intricacies of forgotten controversies.

Both ministers and people believed that the Christian Church should grow and become strong by the silent and gradual influence of Christian worship, of quiet Christian teaching, and of devout Christian conduct. It was not their way to make a sudden raid in the name of Christ on the irreligion by which they were surrounded. They were "keepers at home." They thought that the example of religious parents and their prayers and the catechising of their households should result in the formation of religious faith and right habits in their own children, and that the peace and integrity of religious families should gradually influence irreligious friends and neighbours. The parable of the leaven contains their conception of the normal growth of the Christian Church.

This conception has profound truth in it, and may, perhaps, need to be reasserted in our own times. The eighteenth century—I mean the eighteenth century in its early and peaceful period—which has been re-

garded with indiscriminating contempt, is gradually recovering authority. It is not merely the furniture of the reign of Queen Anne which has become fashionable in some quarters during the last few years. As some men have begun to look back to the first half of the last century as the golden age in our literature and politics, so some men are consciously or unconsciously endeavouring to restore its religion. I quite believe that we have some things to learn from the Evangelical Nonconformity which was not yet agitated and excited by the fervour of the Revival. The parable of the leaven is, perhaps, too much forgotten in these times ; we are so impressed with the importance of organisation and active effort that we seem likely to place every one of the Ten Commandments under the protection of a separate Committee, with its Treasurer, Secretary, and deputations, and to organise a League for the promotion of every separate Christian grace. But the parable of the leaven contains only part of the truth, and, because our fathers mistook it for the whole truth, they shrunk from what seemed to them the wild and reckless movements of the Revival. They thought that the Methodists were in too great a hurry about saving men. It was hard to believe that a man who was a drunkard and a profane person in the morning could legitimately rejoice in "the full assurance of faith" at night. The Methodist prayer-meetings, with the groans, the cries, and the excited joy which disturbed the peace of the neighbourhood, were regarded with dismay, and probably with disgust.

But the flame could not be extinguished ; it continued to burn fiercely and to spread rapidly ; it became a conflagration. At last Baptists and Independents took fire, and even Unitarianism glowed, for a time, with new fervour. At the beginning of the present century the temper and habits of the Evangelical Nonconformists were undergoing a surprising change ; they had fairly caught what their ecclesiastical ancestors, forty or fifty years before, would have called the Methodist fever.

Those were glorious days. With the return of spiritual earnestness there returned a more vigorous faith in the substance of the Evangelical creed, and this, again, fed the fires of spiritual earnestness. We had a race of preachers in Independent pulpits—Wilkes and Hyatt, and Leifchild and Parsons, and John Angell James, and their contemporaries—who were true children of the Revival. The leaders of Nonconformity were, most of them, men of natural eloquence and fervid temperament ; they knew how to excite and to impress the common heart ; their faith in Christ and in the Gospel was unvexed by the speculative troubles of later years, and they preached with a vehemence, a solemnity, and a power which produced immense results. The multiplication of our congregations and the increase of our membership were so rapid, we received into our Churches such large masses of people who had never been disciplined by the careful and elaborate training common among us in former times, that the traditions of In-

dependency were submerged, and the "proselytes" became far more numerous than the true seed of Abraham.

We, too, may be said to be the offspring of the movement which created Methodism. We existed and were strong before the movement began, and among us the movement assumed a form which was partly determined by our previous history. Perhaps our Methodist friends would say that the "tang" of the old bottles did something to spoil the new wine. But, however this may have been, we felt the impulse and received something of the inspiration of the new forces which were acting around us; the fresh vitality of the Evangelical Nonconformists of England and the fresh vitality of our kindred Churches on the other side of the Atlantic are largely the results of the Evangelical Revival.

It is difficult, therefore, for us to criticise the Revival impartially; but I think that the time has come when we ought to consider the present position and probable future of the Evangelical movement, and when we, who claim to stand in the Evangelical succession, are bound to consider whether we are completely loyal to the principles and aims of our fathers.

I say to their *principles and aims*. The work which they began they had not time or strength to finish. With great labour and at great cost they laid foundations on which they were unable to build; loyalty to their principles and aims requires us to go on building. To tell us to do nothing more than keep the

foundations from going to decay, to require us to leave them just as they were left when our fathers laid down their tools and passed to their eternal rest, is to ask us to be false to their spirit and their example. This is not fidelity, but treachery ; not manly reverence, but servile superstition.

In all religious movements there are two elements—the Divine and the human ; the one is permanent, the other transient. Loyalty to the leaders of great reformations requires that we should preserve all that came to them from Heaven, for this constituted their true strength ; we do them dishonour, we mar their work instead of perpetuating it, when we insist on preserving what had an inferior origin.

The questions suggested by all these considerations cannot, of course, be discussed to-night ; but I propose to say something on the relations of the Revival to Theology, to Worship, to the Idea of the Church, and to Ethics.

I.

As I have already said, the *theology* of the Evangelical Revival, both in its affirmations and denials, was substantially the theology of the Reformation. The Puritans of the seventeenth century and the Evangelicals of the eighteenth were the legitimate descendants of the Reformers.

Now there are clear signs that the movement of theological speculation which began in the early part of the sixteenth century, and which has assumed a permanent form in the confessions and creeds of the

great Protestant Churches, is coming to an end. This is a fact of immeasurable importance to Evangelical Christians. If we refuse to recognise it, we shall soon be unable to render any great service to our own generation ; we shall be unable to render any service at all to the next.

The scholastic theology was the creation of the Christian mind of Europe when Europe was under the discipline of the philosophy of Aristotle. Its substance was the traditional faith of the Church ; its intellectual form was determined by the great master of method who for so many centuries moulded the intellect of Western Christendom. With the revival of learning in the fifteenth century a theological revolution became inevitable. The Protestant Reformation was the result of the intellectual excitement and audacity of the scholars of Florence who flourished under the splendid patronage of Lorenzo the Magnificent as well as of the spiritual struggles of Martin Luther. But when the Reformers undertook the task of constructing a theology for the Reformed Churches, the intellectual revolution which began with the Renaissance was incomplete—it is not complete yet—and while they made immense and salutary changes in the dogmas of the Church by a constant appeal to the authority of Holy Scripture, their method was still powerfully influenced by the decaying scholasticism. There were other causes which gave to their work a provisional character. Indeed all work of this kind is necessarily but for a time ; it has to be done

over again whenever any great changes have taken place in the intellectual condition of Christendom. Such changes have plainly been going on very rapidly during the last three hundred years. It looks as if we had almost escaped from the philosophical methods which still retained much of their authority in the time of the Reformers. If the intellectual revolution is approaching its term, the process of re-constructing our theological systems will soon have to be gone through again.

The theology of the Evangelical movement was the theology of the Reformation, but in this country as elsewhere the theology of the Reformation assumed two forms. Calvinism had a vigorous and almost undisputed ascendancy in the English Church from the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth till nearly the middle of the reign of James I. It retained its ascendancy among the Puritans under James I. and Charles I. The spread of Arminianism among the Anglican clergy, and the protection afforded to the new doctrine by James I. during the latter half of his reign and by his son, were among the causes which provoked the Civil War. Calvinism was the creed of the overwhelming majority of the Puritans of the Commonwealth. It was the creed of the Nonconformists of the Restoration. It was still strong among the more earnest Dissenters when the Revival began. Whitfield and his friends maintained the tradition; they taught the theology of France and Geneva. But Wesley was largely under the influence of Germany,

which had remained faithful to the great name of Luther. The Evangelicals of the Established Church have been, as a rule, firm Calvinists; the Methodists following Wesley's lead, have regarded Calvinism as a slander on the justice and mercy of God.

Among Evangelical Nonconformists the severe and rigid lines of Calvinism have been gradually relaxed. Mr. Spurgeon stands alone among the modern leaders of Evangelical Nonconformists in his fidelity to the older Calvinistic creed. The change became evident about the time of Andrew Fuller among the Baptists, and of Edward Williams among the Congregationalists. Edward Williams was a former pastor of this Church, and wrote a book, famous in its day, intended to reconcile what he called the Divine equity with the Divine sovereignty. My immediate predecessor, John Angell James, was a characteristic representative of the transition period. He was intensely Evangelical, loyal from the very core of his heart to the spirit of the Revival; and in his later days he was greatly depressed by the dangers which threatened the central articles of the Evangelical creed—the articles which are held in common by Methodists and Calvinists. But he followed with close interest the controversies which led to the temporary schism in the Presbyterian Church of the United States, and his sympathies and convictions went with the men of the “new school.” Many of the old Calvinistic phrases were on his lips to the last, but the genuine Calvinistic meaning had gone out of them. The decay of Calvinism among Evan-

gelical Nonconformists has been largely due to the influence of Methodism. John Wesley rendered us immense service by the vigour with which he asserted the moral freedom of man as against the Calvinistic doctrine of the Divine decrees, and the universality of the Atonement as against the Calvinistic doctrine which limited the relations of the death of Christ to the elect.

But other influences have been acting on the traditional creed of our Churches, and they must be also acting on the creed of the Methodist societies.¹ That

¹ The theology of Methodism is as yet less powerfully affected by recent changes in the moral and intellectual condition of Christendom than the theology of Congregationalism. It is now nearly a hundred years since Congregationalists began to part with their Calvinism, and they have not yet been able to construct any satisfactory and permanent theological scheme to take its place. They have been exposed to the storms of modern controversy and the keen winds of modern doubt, unprotected by the shelter of a strong and venerable theological system. One scheme after another has been rapidly run up, but they were not strong enough to stand the weather. The revolt against Calvinism had another effect : it encouraged a revolutionary spirit, led us to suspect every part of our creed, and made the idea of theological changes familiar to us. The Methodists have not been predisposed by any such causes to attempt the reconstruction of their theological theories, but whatever immunity they at present enjoy from the troubles by which we have been tried can be only temporary. How the great organised Churches, whether Presbyterian or Methodist, will pass through the storms which are certain to break upon them it is hard to anticipate. May God give them light and courage that they may hold fast to all that is Divine in their confessions and doctrinal standards and be willing to part with everything besides.

general movement of European thought of which I have spoken is rendering it impossible to retain theological theories which were constructed in the sixteenth century. Men whose whole life is rooted in Christ, to whom He is the Eternal Word of God, "the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person," "the propitiation for the sin of the world," the Prince, the Saviour, and the Judge of men, are conscious that the rivets which fastened their doctrinal definitions are loosening—they hardly know how or why—that their theological theories, as distinct from their religious faith, are dissolving and melting away. While not relaxing their hold on the Divine revelation which has come to them through Christ, they are asking for some more satisfactory intellectual account of the great facts and truths which are their joy and strength. There is hardly a theological definition which they can accept without qualification; there is hardly a theological phrase which is not coloured by speculations which seem to them incredible. They have not lost sight of sun and stars; they will tell you that with their increasing years the glory of the sun is brighter to them than ever, and that the stars are more mysterious and divine; but they want a new astronomical theory. The sun and stars are God's handiwork; astronomical theories are the provisional human explanations of Divine wonders.

It will not do to tell men that they should be satisfied with the splendours of the shining heavens and care nothing for theories. It is a trustful and

generous spirit which leads them to believe that the intellect, as well as the conscience the heart and the will, should be active in the service of Christ. A permanent suppression of the intellect is one of the worst kinds of suicide ; and a Church which cannot speak to the intellect of every age and of every country in its own tongue—according to its own intellectual methods—has lost that noble gift of which the marvel of Pentecost was a transient and comparatively worthless symbol.

I cannot help asking with some anxiety whether this gift is likely to appear among the heirs of the Evangelical Revival—whether the heirs of the Evangelical Revival have any earnest desire for the gift. As yet the Evangelical movement has produced no original theologians of the first or even the second rank. It has been more eager to seek and to save the lost than to investigate the foundations of Christian doctrine ; it has displayed heroic vigour and zeal in evangelizing the world, but it has shown less courage in confronting those great questions of Christian philosophy, which in all the most energetic ages of Christendom have tasked the noblest intellectual powers of the Church.

The work of theological reconstruction must be done. It can only be done effectively when the religious faith and ardour of the Church are intense, and when robust genius and massive learning are united with saintly devotion. A theology which is the creation of a poor and degraded religious life will

have neither stability nor grandeur. We must all become better Christians before we can hope to see great theologians.

Meanwhile—and this, perhaps, is the lesson of the hour—all Evangelical Churches should frankly recognise that the Evangelical theology—not the Evangelical Faith—is passing through a period of transition. We should not rigorously insist on the acceptance either of the subordinate details of our creed or of the scientific forms in which we are accustomed to state even its regal and central articles. It would be treason to truth to trifle with the immortal substance of the gospel of Christ ; it would be treason to charity to refuse to receive as brethren those who may differ from us about the theological forms in which the substance of the Gospel may be best expressed

II.

The Evangelical Revival produced a remarkable effect on our *worship*. Like nearly every other popular religious movement, Methodism has owed much of its charm and power to its songs. But for the hymns of Charles Wesley the Revival would have been wanting in very much of its passion and its joy. It was impossible for other Churches to hear the Methodists singing with such hearty good-will and not to sing themselves. In church after church the songs of the people began to be heard as they had not been heard for many generations, till now we are all singing together from one end of the land to the other.

I think that the greatest writers of popular hymns during the last century and a half have been children of the Evangelical movement. Watts and Doddridge belong to an earlier age. They were the surprising product of Evangelical Nonconformity at a time when we should have supposed that the Nonconformists could have had no heart to sing at all—when the fire and depth of Puritanism had gone, and when the Evangelical Revival had not yet begun. Since the Revival we have had a succession of hymn-writers whom, perhaps, we should not be inclined to give up, even if by parting with them we could purchase the theologians we so sorely need. There is Charles Wesley at the head of them, who takes equal rank with Watts himself, and to whom some of us, in certain moods, may feel inclined to attribute a still higher place. He is followed by Toplady, by Cowper, by Newton, by Steele, and by many other writers of inferior name in the last century ; and in this century by Montgomery, Conder, Monsell, Lyte, George Rawson, Ray Palmer, Miss Elliott and Miss Waring—all of them the direct offspring of the Revival. Dr. Bonar would perhaps claim a different ancestry ; but the Scotch revivals from which he springs were a kindred movement. My friend, Mr. Gill, who has produced some of the noblest hymns written since Charles Wesley's time—hymns which but for some superficial faults would have achieved a far wider popularity—might claim to represent the traditions of Puritanism ; but he, too, bears traces of that Revival from which

the descendants of the Puritans, a hundred years ago, received new life and vigour. There are other names, belonging to other provinces of the Church, which deserve recognition — Heber, Keble, Christopher Wordsworth, Faber ; but the great popular names are those which have been connected with the Evangelical movement, and the service which they have rendered to the worship of the Church cannot be measured.

About the external incidents of worship the men of the Revival were very indifferent. One place was as good to worship God in as another ; an old hay-loft, a farm-house kitchen, a carpenter's shop, was as sacred as any cathedral. When they built chapels it was their only anxiety to get as large a chapel as they could for their money. They cared nothing about the ecclesiastical style, or, indeed, about any style at all. Their minds were filled with the awful yet glorious work of saving the souls of men, and with the blessedness of approaching God. The walls and the roof of the building in which they met were forgotten. To me, the square red-brick chapels which were built in those times, with staring windows and low ceilings, are infinitely significant. They are the visible symbols of a faith which was unconscious of things seen and temporal, and was wholly absorbed in things unseen and eternal. It was in chapels like these that men listened to the strains of an eloquence by which their hearts were melted to penitence and inspired with exulting joy in the love of God ; it was in chapels like these that week by week devout souls discovered with

infinite wonder and thankfulness how near heaven had come to earth. These were the buildings in which the Evangelical movement achieved its glorious successes. The churchmen of the Evangelical succession were as careless about such matters as the Nonconformists. The Evangelical clergy thought nothing about restoring "churches;" it was their business to restore men to God. It did not occur to them that heavy galleries and high-backed pews were ugly, if only they were crowded with men and women eager to listen to the Gospel. The portentous "three-deckers" from which they preached did not provoke any hostile criticism among their hearers; it mattered nothing in what kind of a pulpit the preacher stood if he could only tell them "the way of salvation." To spend money in scraping columns of Purbeck marble which had been covered with whitewash, or in filling windows with painted glass, would have seemed to many of them an odd way of glorifying God, and work of this kind would have contributed nothing to the depth of their devotion.

I am not saying whether they were right or wrong. I suppose that many of the Evangelical churches were grossly neglected. A building in which people are accustomed to meet every week should be at least clean and wholesome. I suppose, too, that some of the hideous chapels erected at the end of the last century and the beginning of this were as costly as the pleasanter buildings which have been erected more recently; and there is no more sanctity in archi-

tectural ugliness than in architectural beauty. But what we should remember is that the genius of the Evangelical movement is unfriendly to the kind of importance which has been attached of late years to the externals of worship. It does not recognise the sacredness of places, and is therefore under no obligation to lavish marble and gold on church buildings. Nor does it rely on any visible and material aids to create or sustain the sentiment of worship; it is therefore indifferent to the mystic symbolism which is wrought into stone, and it fears rather than welcomes the awe and solemnity which are produced by the wonderful work of the architects of the middle ages. Naturally, most of the attempts of Evangelical Non-conformists at "ecclesiastical architecture" have been fortunate failures; and we all fail alike—Methodists, Baptists, and Independents. No matter what knowledge we think we have on our building committees, no matter what architect we employ, we never get quite the right thing. And a real success would be a portent. To the Revival the building is nothing and the heart of the worshipper everything.

The Evangelical Revival gave us Charles Wesley and the great popular hymn writers; and wherever it travelled it made itself known by bursts of popular song. The movement of 1833—the Tractarian reaction—gave us church architects and has made itself known in every part of the kingdom by "the restoration of churches." The difference is very instructive.

I may be reminded that during the last twenty

or five-and-twenty years we have become weary or ashamed of the music of our fathers and have been trying to sing the strains which have been taught us by musicians who are strangers to the traditions of the Revival. I know it, and I often wonder how it is that we have not created new musicians of our own. The music we have abandoned could not be retained. It often had a pathos and a passion and a fire in it which we should be glad to recall ; but it often had a rudeness and boisterousness which at last became intolerable. But our later masters have rarely understood the true temper and spirit of the children of the Revival ; and as I listen to much of the singing which has become common among us during the last quarter of a century, I feel that there is something in it which is foreign to the religious traditions which have come to us from our fathers, and I say to myself that these are not the songs of my own land.

III.

In its development of the idea of the *Church* the Evangelicals have been singularly ineffective. They have been as indifferent to Church polity and Church discipline as to church building. Mr. Gladstone describes "the peculiar bias" of the Evangelicals of the Establishment towards "individualism in religion" as their "besetting weakness,"¹ He says that

"The perception of this bias has tempted some to say that they have found more Churchmanship, more inward sense of the

¹ Pp. 215-237.

personal obligations entailed by belonging to a given religious society among Nonconformists, or among the Presbyterians of Scotland than in the average members of the Evangelical body" (p. 215).

I am inclined to think that this judgment is sound.

Among ourselves the idea of the Church, for which the early Congregationalists cared so much that they endured imprisonment, exile, and even death in the attempt to realise it, was almost swept away by the vehement tide of the Evangelical movement. It is still one of the characteristic marks of those who may be described as the extreme Evangelicals among us that they believe that evangelical doctrine is everything and that the organised life of a Christian society is of inconsiderable importance. They own no allegiance to the Church to which they happen to belong. They do not recognise its authority. That their Church is in any sense their home has never occurred to them. That any close ties of exceptional sacredness bind them to those who belong to it has never occurred to them. They are conscious of nearer kinship to men of other communions who share their special religious "views" or who are engaged in similar religious work.

The Methodists, however, are not open to this criticism. And Methodism has founded one great and remarkable Church institution. The Class-meeting is, perhaps, the most striking and original of all the fruits of the Revival. It was not invented ; it was the creation of the circumstances in which the Revival was carried on ; it was a natural product of the soil ;

and the Methodist people should take good heed how they treat so precious and wonderful a growth. It renders possible a far more effective fulfilment of the idea of the pastorate and a far more perfect realisation of the communion of saints than are common in any other Protestant community.

There are some things in Methodism which I do not covet. I do not covet the close and compact organisation which is made possible by the authority of the Conference ; but I covet the Class-meeting. If we could transplant the institution into Congregational soil we should modify it. The difficulty is that it does not seem to bear transplanting. But if we could transplant it—if all the members of this Church were grouped together in “classes” of a dozen or twenty, meeting for prayer, for conversation on the hopes and duties of the Christian life, for the quiet study of Holy Scripture, and especially of those parts of it which are directly related to conduct and to the discipline of ethical and spiritual character ; if every class had a wise and devout Christian man or woman at the head of it, the trusted friend of all its members—we should secure a depth of religious earnestness, a fulness of religious joy, and a development of moral vigour and refinement which at present seem to be beyond our reach.

Of course Methodism does not correspond to my conception of what a Church should be ; if it did I should be a Methodist, not a Congregationalist. But, if the idea of the Church is imperfectly fulfilled in

Methodism, the idea of Church fellowship is largely realised. This, I believe, is one of the chief secrets of its rapid growth ; and in these times, when Romanism and Ritualism are striving so hard to destroy the Protestantism of the English Church, Evangelical Christians should remember that Individualism involves a suppression of half the duties and a surrender of half the blessedness of the Christian life. The children of God belong to the "household of faith." Religious isolation is alien to all their healthiest instincts. If they cannot find a home—a real home—in a true Church, they will enter a false Church rather than be without any home at all. Individualism is powerless against the great organised religious communities.

IV.

About the *ethical* side of the Evangelical Revival I can say very little. That it accomplished a great moral reformation is unquestionable ; that in its moral aims and achievements it has proved to be seriously defective is, I think, equally unquestionable.

The explanation is not far to seek. The great aim of the Revival was to rescue men from eternal perdition. To the leaders of the Revival the difference between the saved and the unsaved was infinite. They were dragging men from a burning house ; they were landing them from a sinking ship ; when their converts were beyond the reach of the devouring flame and the raging sea their great work was done.

Of course, they insisted on the obligation of the ordinary virtues—the virtues which were recognised by the common conscience of their times—and these virtues were placed under the sanction of the authority of God and the judgment to come. But the Revival had no ethical originality.

The Christian Faith, when it came into the world, accepted and endorsed the nobler ethics of paganism, assumed and confirmed “the law written in the heart,” but it also proposed to men a new ethical ideal. The ethical movement was arrested by the social disorganisation occasioned by the fall of the Empire; it was arrested by the corruptions of the mediæval Church; it was arrested by the retreat of large numbers of earnest men and women from the ordinary relations of human society. But the new moral ideas which Christianity revealed, and the new moral spirit it created have constituted a new epoch in the moral development of the race. Christianity consecrated the Family, liberated the Slave, made Compassion for human suffering a religious virtue, and taught men to serve God by building hospitals for the sick and asylums for the miserable.

Protestantism vindicated afresh the sanctity of the family, and by its vehement hostility to sacerdotalism and monasticism attempted to efface the pernicious distinction between the secular and the religious life. It also asserted with great earnestness the austere obligations of truthfulness. But the true ethical spirit of Protestantism has never attained a complete and

harmonious development. The Evangelical Revival, which inherited the theology of Protestantism, ought to have accepted the responsibility of carrying forward the moral reformation which Protestantism had only begun.

Two great triumphs, indeed, I think that the Evangelical Revival may fairly claim. It was Evangelical enthusiasm that gave passion and vigour to the Anti-Slavery movement ; and we owe it mainly to Evangelical zeal that England has been covered with Sunday schools.

The immense growth of the Sunday-school system has profoundly affected the modern Evangelical ideal of the Christian life ; and this in two ways. The great demand it has created for voluntary religious service has given a new place to the duty of what is specifically called "Christian work." I imagine that there was never a period in the history of Christendom when so large a proportion of the unofficial members of the Church were giving the time and the strength to Christian work which they are giving now. Among Evangelical Nonconformists, and I imagine that it is the same among Evangelical members of the Church of England, the obligation to "work" is universally recognised ; and where the faculty and opportunity for "work" exist, public Christian opinion condemns the man or the woman who is doing nothing. The mediæval ideal of saintliness has still an unhealthy influence on the Evangelical imagination, but the ideal is practically disappearing. The Evangelical saint of

to-day is not a man who spends his nights and days in fasting and prayer, but a man who is a zealous Sunday-school teacher, holds mission services among the poor, and attends innumerable committee meetings. "Work" has taken its place side by side with prayer; there are some of us who think that it has taken too high a place, and that prayer has been too much suppressed. However this may be, the Evangelical movement has rendered immense service by its vigorous and successful assertion of the obligations resting on the Christian laity to take an active part in the work of the Church. The Sacramentalists are now asserting the obligation with, perhaps, equal earnestness; but it was the Evangelicals who recognised and proclaimed it first. Methodism appealed from the very beginning to the active co-operation of the "laity" with the ministry; in other Evangelical communities the religious obligations resting upon laymen have been discovered more and more clearly and enforced more and more earnestly as the magnitude of the Sunday-school system has increased.

But the growth of the Sunday-school system has modified the Evangelical ideal of character in another way. The Sunday school is often the centre of many agencies for the moral reformation and social improvement of the poor. If it is a "mission school" these agencies are not unfrequently regarded as of more importance than the instruction given to the children in the classes. The claims of an active philanthropy have thus secured general recognition; and special move-

ments for the promotion of temperance, for the recovery of the fallen, for the relief of the wretched, and for the general elevation of the life of the less fortunate classes of the people, have received strong support from Christians of the Evangelical type; it is acknowledged that moral and social reforms lie within the true province of the Christian Church.

If in our time there were another manifestation of the great power of God, at all comparable to that which has made the last century for ever memorable in the history of this country, very remarkable results—perhaps very surprising results—might come from these two “ideas” which have now, I think, been wrought into the very texture of the religious mind of England. But as yet both ideas are “cribbed, cabin’d, and confin’d;” there does not seem sufficient intellectual force or sufficient ethical force in the Evangelical movement to expand them to their full proportions and to apply them freely to the whole scheme of human life.

The idea of the obligation resting on the laity to engage in religious work is one of unmeasured potency. If without “ordination” men may teach and preach and conduct worship, what meaning is there in the fences which, even among Evangelicals, separate the life of the minister from the life of the layman? Give the idea full scope, and the sacredness of what is called “secular” business will sooner or later be recognised as it has never been recognised yet; and we shall have a new and Christian conception of the

commercial and industrial pursuits of mankind. The idea of philanthropic work among the poor is equally powerful. As yet, among Evangelical Christians, philanthropic work is little more than a fresh expression of the same spirit that assigned to alms-giving so great a place among the virtues of the mediæval Church. But let the idea grow, and it will give us a new and Christian conception of the true relations between the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak ; or, rather, it will create a new and Christian theory of the social and political organisation of the State.

As yet, however, the Evangelical Revival has done very little to give us a nobler and more Christian ideal of practical life. It has been very timid. It has shrunk from politics. It has regarded literature and art with a certain measure of distrust. In business it has been content with attaching Divine sanctions to recognised virtues. We are living in a new world, and Evangelicals do not seem to have discovered it. The immense development of the manufacturing industries, the wider separation of classes in great towns—a separation produced by the increase of commercial wealth—the new relations which have grown up between the employers and the employed, the spread of popular education, the growth of a vast popular literature, the increased political power of the masses of the people, the gradual decay of the old aristocratic organisation of society, and the advance, in many forms, of the spirit of democracy—have urgently demanded fresh applications of the eternal ideas of the Christian Faith

to conduct. But Evangelical Christians have hardly touched the new ethical problems which have come with the new time.

There was one doctrine of John Wesley's—the doctrine of perfect sanctification—which ought to have led to a great and original ethical development; but the doctrine has not grown; it seems to remain just where John Wesley left it. There has been a want of the genius or the courage to attempt the solution of the immense practical questions which the doctrine suggests. The questions have not been raised—much less solved. To have raised them effectively, indeed, would have been to originate an ethical revolution which would have had a far deeper effect on the thought and life—first of England, and then of the rest of Christendom—than was produced by the Reformation of the sixteenth century.

*“We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old;”—*yes, the leaders of the Revival knew that the power which won their great triumphs was not their own but God's; and if in hours of despondency we are ready to say that because we have lost the eloquence of Whitefield, the genius and sagacity and courage of John Wesley, the fervour of his brother Charles, and the fresh enthusiasm of a crowd of other men who shared their work and their glory, we cannot hope to see, in these days, any rapid and decisive religious reformation, we are false to the

faith of our fathers. It was not "their own sword," nor "their own arm" that subdued vast masses of men to the Faith, but "thy right hand and thine arm," O God, "and the light of thy countenance, because thou didst favour them." God's strength is not spent; "He fainteth not, neither is he weary;" He is still "mighty to save."

The lesson of the Revival is a lesson of faith in God. The men who began this work a century and a half ago did not know what was to come of it. They did the work which lay near to them—very humble and obscure work most of it seemed—and within a few years they saw with wonder and with thankfulness the whole country agitated with religious excitement, and thousands and tens of thousands of men breaking with sin, turning to God, and doing works meet for repentance. They were true to God, and God blessed them and their work beyond the measure of their largest hopes. When we cease to rely on our own strength and our own earnestness, on the truth of our creed, on the perfection of our Church polity, on the excellence of our organisations for the conversion of mankind; when we cease to think of winning honour for ourselves, for our party, for our creed; when we learn to trust in God with all our heart, and to care for nothing except the final victory of His righteousness and love, we may discover that He is both willing and able to do as much for us in our times as He ever did for our fathers in the brightest and most sacred periods of the history of Christendom.

II.

NATURAL MORALITY.¹

I HAVE announced my intention to preach a short course of sermons on morals. This evening I shall say something about what may be called Natural Morality—morality apart from revelation.

The mere announcement of the subject may, perhaps, provoke a protest. For it is a common impression that we are dependent for all our knowledge of moral duty upon the revelation of God's will contained in the Bible; and so when some people hear of a proposal to teach morals without using the Bible they are astonished; they think that where the Bible is not taught morals cannot be taught.² Some who

¹ This sermon and the four following sermons were preached in Carr's Lane Chapel, Birmingham, on successive Sunday evenings—August 31, September 7, 14, 21, 28, 1879.

² A few weeks before this sermon was preached there had been a sharp discussion in the Birmingham School Board on a scheme for giving moral lessons apart from religious teaching. The discussion had excited considerable interest in the town, and some persons supposed that I preached this sermon in order to illustrate and sustain my own position in relation to the scheme. If this had been the fact I do not know that there would have been any harm in it. If in any public controversy a preacher thinks that he discovers that among those who are accessible to him from the pulpit there are grave errors in re-

do not go quite so far as this believe that apart from the motives to moral goodness contained in the Bible there are no motives worth speaking of why any of us should do right.

Let us consider for a moment what the less extravagant of these convictions really means. It means that unless a man has faith in God, reverence for God's authority, a dread of God's anger, and a desire to win God's approval, there is no strong *motive* to prevent him from being a liar, a drunkard, and a thief, a bad husband, a bad father, a profligate, and a villain.

If we are dependent on the Bible for all our *knowledge* of moral duty, then we are landed in still more startling results. In that case a man who has never read the Bible, or who does not believe in it, cannot even see that lying and drunkenness and thieving and profligacy are bad things, and that truthfulness, temperance, honesty, and purity of life are good things. If we cannot tell that there is any difference

lation to important moral and religious truths, it seems both natural and legitimate that he should try to set them right. Perhaps one of the reasons why men have thought sermons very dull is to be found in the fact that there seems to be a tacit understanding that sermons should be on subjects on which men are *not* thinking during the week, just as one of the reasons why sermons do not produce much moral effect is the curious superstition that it is a preacher's duty to analyse and condemn the sins about which he reads in the Book of Genesis or the Book of Kings, and to say nothing of the sins which he had been reading about in the "Times" the very morning that he selected his text. But it so happened that this first sermon on *Natural Morality* occurred to me after I had begun to think of preaching a sermon or two on *Christian Morals*.

between virtue and vice until we know that God forbids the one and commands the other, and if we cannot know this apart from the Bible, then we reach the amazing conclusion that if a man does not believe in the Bible he can see no difference between vice and virtue. But you know perfectly well that among your own friends there are men who have no religious faith and who yet abhor lying and idleness and drunkenness as much as you abhor them yourselves. Some of you were vicious in your lives before you learnt to acknowledge Christ as your Prince and to trust in Him as your Saviour, but in your worst and darkest times you knew that there was an awful difference between right and wrong.

Look at the great heathen writers. Plato and Aristotle, Epictetus and Marcus Antoninus had very noble conceptions of Moral Duty, but they were not believers in the Bible. Their books are still textbooks in morals even to ourselves, who believe that Christ was God manifest in the flesh. In the old heathen world, before Christ came, there were illustrious examples of a lofty virtue: there were men who not only recognised the obligations of many forms of goodness, but who gloriously fulfilled these obligations.

That the Lord Jesus Christ has ennobled our conceptions of morality, as well as brought into the world new motives and aids to right doing, I shall have occasion to show next Sunday; but He always assumed that, apart from His teaching, men have a

knowledge of the authority of duty. He also assumed that there are certain great outlines of duty which men may recognise for themselves without any supernatural revelation. He came, not to destroy the old law—not to say that it was worthless, much less to say that before His coming men had no law at all—He came, not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it.

Perhaps you may reply that the words of His which I have just quoted refer to the law which God Himself had given to the Jews; but what He said about His relation to the Jewish law is equally applicable, as I think we shall see presently, to the moral law which was known to the heathen.

For the Gospel, and that part of it which in the view of the strictest sect of Evangelical Christians constitutes the essence and substance of the Gospel, implies and takes for granted that apart from supernatural revelation men have a knowledge of duty. Indeed, it takes for granted very much more than this. The Gospel is a declaration to all men that for Christ's sake God is willing to forgive their sins. Whether the apostles preached to the Jews or to the heathen, this was a principal part of their message. This belonged to the substance of the revelation they had received from Christ. But the Gospel could have no meaning for men if, before they heard it and apart from it, they did not know that they had done wrong. "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." The innocent need no pardon, but they that are guilty. Where there is no con-

sciousness of sin, the Gospel of forgiveness receives no welcome ; it will not be understood. If in any nation, in any age, the natural conscience were murdered—if men did not see for themselves that vice is an evil thing, and that it is their duty to be virtuous—then the Gospel would find nothing in them on which it could take hold.

I suppose that there are men in whom the conscience has been actually murdered, murdered by violence, or murdered by starvation, that is, by long-continued neglect. It is possible for the physical sense of vision to be lost, and men who are stone blind cannot tell whether the sun is shining in the heavens or whether it is midnight. It is possible for the sense of feeling to be lost, and then if the arm is cut with knives there is no pain. It is possible for intellectual power to be lost, so that when you speak to a man in the language which he learnt from his mother's lips, he has less understanding of your meaning than a dog or a bird. And so it is possible for the light of conscience to be quenched, for the sensitiveness of the moral nature to be paralysed, for the higher reason to perish, so that men are unable of themselves to see any difference between right and wrong and unable to see what strong motives there are for doing right. When that happens their condition is appalling. Is it happening to any of you? Are any of you conscious that the sharp contrast between truth and falsehood is gradually melting away? That it seems a less dreadful thing than it

once seemed to violate the law of integrity? That for you there is a less awful difference to-night between purity and impurity than there was five or ten years ago? If so, then moral blindness, moral paralysis, has already begun. You ought to be infinitely more alarmed than if you had discovered that a film was coming over your eyes, or that there was a numbness in your right arm, which sometimes almost prevented you from raising it. With God all things are possible. He who can give sight to the blind, feeling to the paralysed, reason to the idiot, may breathe the breath of life into a dead conscience, but He alone can do it.

Men sometimes speak of religious faith as being the foundation of morals; the expression is a very unhappy one. It would be nearer the truth to speak of morals as the foundation of religion; even this would not be quite accurate. Metaphors are very useful, but very misleading. The life of man is an organic unity. It is hard to say which part of his life is the foundation and which the superstructure. His nature is not built up by mechanical processes; it grows. But what is perfectly true is that where there is no knowledge of morals there can be nothing that you and I can admit to be religious faith. Destroy the faculty by which a man recognises for himself, apart from an authoritative revelation, the righteousness and beauty of the great moral virtues, and you also destroy the possibility of faith in God and of reverence for His perfections.

For what are the grounds of our trust in God and

our reverence for Him? His infinite power? No : infinite power, if not governed by justice and goodness, would fill us with terror. His infinite knowledge? No : infinite knowledge might fill us with wonder, but could command neither affection nor confidence. We trust God and reverence Him because of His righteousness, His truth, His infinite love, the tenderness of His pity and the wealth of His grace. These we call His moral perfections, and we see that in themselves they are admirable, that they deserve our homage, our reverence, and our faith. We *see* this ; we do not take it on trust. We cannot trust God Himself until we know that He is trustworthy. If the faculty were destroyed which enables us to see for ourselves the authority of righteousness, we should find nothing in God to create the central elements of worship and faith.

This regal faculty is called by various names : conscience, the moral sense, the higher reason. Its existence and greatness are asserted by all the nobler schools of philosophy as well as by all the nobler types of religious speculation ; asserted by great Christian theologians as well as by great moralists. To deny that man can, for himself, apart from the Bible, distinguish between virtue and vice, and recognise the obligations of virtue, is to revolt against the authority of the most venerable and sacred names in Christendom. It is to revolt against the authority of the Bible itself. Listen to the words of St. Paul, which are the text of this evening's sermon—

“ When the Gentiles which have not the law do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.”—ROM. ii. 14, 15.

St. Paul believed that heathen men not only knew many of their duties, but discharged them.

This subject is not a speculative one merely. I have often told you that one great defect of what we call the Evangelical Revival consists in its failure to afford to those whom it has restored to God a lofty ideal of practical righteousness, and a healthy, vigorous moral training. The result is lamentable. Many Evangelical Christians have the poorest, meanest, narrowest conceptions of moral duty, and are almost destitute of moral strength. If this defect is to be remedied, we Evangelicals must think more about Christian ethics; and we cannot think about Christian ethics to any good purpose unless we begin where I have begun to-night, by recognising the power which belongs to man himself to distinguish between right and wrong.

This power is one of the noblest prerogatives of our nature. Next to the power of knowing God and holding communion with Him, it is the most wonderful of human faculties—far more wonderful than any of our intellectual endowments.

But Evangelical Christians, if they acknowledge its

existence, seem to forget that, like every other faculty, it needs training and discipline. We are born with the organ of vision ; but we *learn* to see. Many persons suffer from what is called colour blindness. I remember sitting at a dinner-table with a friend of mine who could see no difference between the colour of a brilliant crimson flower and the colour of the green leaf on which it was lying. In the early days of railway-travelling accidents occurred because guards and engine-drivers were appointed who could see no difference between a red signal and a green one. Since this was discovered, the sight of every railway servant has been tested before appointment. I used to think that this extraordinary affection always arose from some fault in the structure of the eye itself, or in the sensitiveness of the optic nerve ; but I was reading in the "Times" of last week a curious and interesting story which shows that colour blindness may be the result of a defective education of the faculty of vision. A man was recently admitted into St. Thomas's Hospital in London, who was found to be unable to see that yellow is unlike red, that blue is unlike green ; one of the nurses relieved the weary hours of sickness by teaching him the colour alphabet. She showed him skeins of wool of different colours, and while he was lying in the hospital, he learnt to see that there were differences between them ; that one was orange and another purple, and another violet and another green. His colour blindness was not the result of any disease or malformation in

the organ of vision, but of want of education. He was unable to see the broadest contrasts of colour until he had received definite teaching.

Most of us learn to distinguish colours just as we learn to speak our own language, without receiving any systematic instruction from others and without any careful study on our own part. I suppose, however, that drapers and milliners and other persons whose business obliges them to notice the finer gradations of tints, obtain the power of recognising the difference between shades of blue and scarlet which seem to ordinary eyes perfectly alike. Their eyes are not better than ours, but they have been better taught. And so most of us, if we have lived among good, honest people, learn, without regular teaching, to distinguish in a rough way between right and wrong. There are exceptions to this rule. I once met with a young man who told me frankly that he could see nothing wrong in deliberate and systematic lying, though he did not like to be found out. His case was like that of my friend who could not see the difference between the crimson flower and the green leaf. But the instances of gross moral blindness are not common. The consciences of most men are sufficiently trained by the life of the family and the life of the school, and by the life of the workshop or the counting-house, to enable them to recognise the broader, stronger contrasts between virtue and vice. They see that stealing is wrong, that drunkenness is wrong, that lying is wrong.

But—and this is my point—if the conscience is to have a keen vision, if its discrimination between right and wrong is to be unaffected by the cross lights of personal interest and strong passion, it must be trained far more perfectly than the consciences of most of us are trained. The eyes which are able to distinguish between different shades of the same colour have been educated for their work. The conscience, if its discrimination between right and wrong is to be equally delicate, must also receive its appropriate education.

Surely it is worth educating. You think it a great calamity if your child's memory is not trained. You take trouble to train your child's voice and to train your child's ear. Your child's conscience, for its own sake, is infinitely more deserving of your care. It is a nobler power. There is a greater waste if it is undeveloped. And it is necessary for the guidance of life.

I have to complain that in very many cases the conscience receives hardly any training at all, even in Christian families and in Christian schools, and, I will add, even in Christian congregations. Parents, teachers, ministers are all alike at fault. If a child tells a lie, the only thing that some parents seem able to do is to tell the child that liars will be sent to hell. But if the child does not see that lying is wrong, they run the risk of provoking in the child's heart moral resentment against God for threatening to punish lying with such an awful doom.

Or the parent thinks that it is enough to say

that God has commanded us to tell the truth. The shadow of the Infinite and Eternal God is made to cross the child's path, and the child is warned not to disobey Him. Now I believe in the salutary influence of authority. Obedience to a power which has a right to command is a virtue—and a virtue which is not too common in these days. But when Divine commands are incessantly invoked they do more harm than good. I wonder whether I can make this quite clear.

There are two ways of teaching morals as there are two ways of teaching arithmetic. You know how arithmetic is taught in a bad school. The rule is given and the child works his "sum" blindly, without knowing the reason of a single process. It is an act of intellectual superstition. It is like saying prayers in an unknown tongue. Whether the rule is right or wrong the child does not see. The rule is accepted on the authority of the teacher or of the book. If the child's mind is sharp and active he may puzzle out the reason of the rule for himself; if not, the teacher leaves him to work in the dark. That is a bad way of teaching arithmetic.

But this is just the way in which some good people teach morality. They give a child God's *rules* of conduct—His laws, and nothing more. Happily, the conscience may discover for itself the beauty and the nobleness of these laws; but if it does, this is not the merit of the teacher, and in many cases it does not. The child is told what the rule is, and is warned that if the rule is not observed God will inflict punish-

ment. If it is only through fear of the punishment that the child observes the rule, the conscience is not enlightened ; the obedience is not moral obedience, but an act of servile superstition.

The appeal to the authority of God should be only occasional. There is something so tremendous in that authority, if the child knows what it means, that by a frequent appeal to it the moral sense is crushed and disabled. And even if this disastrous result is escaped, the perpetual reference of conduct to a definite and imperious law checks the free growth of conscience. When we are following a guide who never leaves us a moment to ourselves, we are likely to take no notice of the path in which we are walking, and our knowledge of the way is likely to be no greater at the end of the journey than at the beginning.

For the education of the conscience we need moral teaching that is really moral, and not religious ; teaching that appeals to the natural conscience by natural means ; that trains the mind to recognise for itself the righteousness of right actions, right habits, and right dispositions ; that insists on the obligation to do right because it is right, without appealing to the Divine authority and to the penalties and rewards of sin and righteousness. It is so easy a thing for those who give religious teaching to sustain moral precepts by the peremptory commandments of God that, through sheer indolence or incapacity, they are in danger of neglecting to employ the varied resources for educating the moral nature which belong to the

natural order. If some teachers of morality are positively restrained from employing religious sanctions and motives, morality may have a better chance.

I do not want to see the vessel of human nature, when exposed to storms of temptation and in danger of being driven on the rocks, held by a single cable, even though it may be the strongest. Religious faith—including the knowledge of God's will, the dread of His anger, the desire of His approbation, a hearty love for Him—is the great security ; but I want to see all the anchors out ; there are times when they are all needed. A genuine love of righteousness for its own sake, a deep hatred of wrong-doing, a sense of the repulsiveness of moral evil and of the infinite loveliness of goodness, a dread of the moral shame and of the moral humiliation which must come from a neglect of duty, a strong passion for the honour of victory over temptation—we have no right to refuse the aid of any of these guarantees of moral integrity. And therefore, I repeat, I want to see the natural conscience educated—educated to see for itself the infinite and eternal gulf between right and wrong, and educated to see for itself the moral motives for right-doing. The moral affections to which righteousness appeals should be trained to energetic activity. Admiration, reverence, wonder, and sympathy should be made the fast allies of goodness ; indignation, abhorrence, scorn, and disgust should be awakened in the soul by injustice, untruthfulness, selfishness, indolence, and impurity.

It is alleged that, apart from the Divine authority, it is impossible to enforce the obligations of virtue. More than once this objection has been put to me in this form : You say to a boy that he ought to tell the truth ; suppose he asks, " Why ought I to tell the truth ? " what can you answer except that God commands it ? But I will ask you another question. Suppose that when you say that God commands us to tell the truth the boy asks, " Why should I do what God commands me ? " what will you answer ? Will you tell him that if he does not obey God he will be punished ? That is no answer. It is no man's duty to do anything simply because he will suffer for not doing it. A meaner, more sandy foundation of morals the perverse ingenuity of man could not invent. Train a child, train yourselves, to regard the menace which guards a moral law as the supreme reason for obeying it, and you destroy the fibre of moral nobleness. The punishment which threatens the violation of a rule of conduct may make it an *expedient* thing to observe the rule ; but when you say that the punishment is what makes obedience a *right* thing, the moral nature, if it is not utterly paralysed, will rise up in vehement revolt against your teaching. A rule must be right in itself, or else it is a crime to punish men for disobeying it.

If a child has been so imperfectly trained that it ever asks, Why ought I to obey God ? you must answer, Because you *ought* ; and if it has been so imperfectly trained that it asks, Why ought I to tell the

truth? you must answer again, Because you *ought*. But neither question will be asked if we have done our duty by our children. If they have learnt from us who God is, if they have heard us speak of Him with reverence and awe and trust and love, they will know for themselves that they ought to obey Him. And if we ourselves are truthful—truthful not under the mechanical restraint of a rule which forbids lying, but at the impulse of a hearty love and admiration for truthfulness; if the necessity of truthfulness is one of those central beliefs by which we are governed when we are not consciously under their authority; if we scorn a lie; if we recoil from a liar as we recoil from some hideous and revolting physical deformity; if our children have read stories about heroic truthfulness which have sent a thrill of enthusiasm through their veins; if they have learnt verses celebrating the dignity of truthfulness and its sacredness—they will know for themselves that lying is a wrong and a shameful thing.

I have pleaded for the education of the conscience in the interest of morality; I also plead for it in the interest of religion.

Why should I trust and obey and worship God? The answer is clear, Because I ought. And wherever that answer is not given by the human soul, no appeal to hope or fear or gratitude will be effective.

The history of some great religious movements may seem to make this position doubtful. There have been times when a contagion of what seemed

mere terror has spread through great crowds of people while listening to a preacher who described in vivid and violent imagery the torments of the damned. The contagion reached thousands and tens of thousands who never heard his voice. Men became passionately eager to "flee from the wrath to come;" the bottomless pit and the devouring flames created a panic from which the moral element may have seemed altogether absent.

I doubt whether the "panic" has ever lasted for many months if the moral element has been really absent. Mere terror is not without its uses. It may break, as with a violent shock, the strong cords of grossly immoral habits; it may paralyse for a time the coarser and baser passions, and may so give the conscience which has been trampled down under the brutal hoofs of insolent vice the chance of asserting its authority; and then the terror secures the alliance of a nobler power. But I believe that as a rule the nobler power has been in alliance with the terror from the very first. Even in the grossest and coarsest natures there may be a vague sense of the sacredness of duty. Conscience, when resisted and unable to subdue the revolt against her rule, continues to utter dark though ineffectual warnings against vice and irreligion; and when the terror created by the lurid imagery and stormy denunciations of the preacher visits the soul, conscience compels it to enter her service, and by the aid of what may be called mercenary troops, makes her throne secure.

However this may be, I do not believe that religious faith can have any secure hold of the nature and life of man except it is confederate with conscience ; and the man who has learned to revere the voice of conscience—the minister of God—is most likely to revere and obey the more august voice of God Himself.

The text reminds us that the absence of religious faith does not exempt us from moral responsibility. To create responsibility it is enough that we know the law of moral duty, though we may know nothing of the tremendous issues of obedience or disobedience. When the Lord Jesus Christ was visibly present in the world, the men who refused to listen to Him did not know His real greatness ; nor did they know how awful were the penalties which were to come upon them for rejecting Him. But they were responsible for their hostility, because His teaching reached their consciences, and they knew that He had a right to be heard. And when the Divine law comes to us unarmed with its tremendous sanctions, we are still under the obligation to obey it, and we incur a guilt which we cannot measure if we refuse to obey.

Looking back upon our youth, we see that the duties which we neglected were graver than they seemed, and that the sins we committed have entailed evil consequences of which we never dreamt. We cannot resent the penalties which have come upon us ; we dare not say that because we did not foresee their magnitude they are unjust. We knew that the

duties ought to be discharged, and we failed to discharge them. We knew that the sins ought to be avoided, and we committed them. And if the vast penalties which are threatened in the world to come against the sins to which we are tempted in this world seem incredible, and if the infinite rewards seem equally incredible which are promised to patient continuance in well-doing, this does not liberate us from responsibility. We may plead that invincible difficulties prevent us from believing either in the rewards or in the penalties. But the practical question is, Do we recognise the obligations of the Law which these rewards and penalties are intended to sustain ?

If we are unfaithful to duties which our own conscience recognises, then "in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ" we shall be self-condemned ; and the measure of our punishment will be determined, not by our own anticipations of what might be due to our disobedience, but by the perfect righteousness of the supreme Judge.

III.

THE MORAL DEMANDS OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

If ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans [the heathen] so?—MATT. v. 46, 47.

WHEN the Lord Jesus Christ began to preach He proclaimed that the kingdom of heaven was near. This was the Gospel—the good news—which He made known to the Jews. And He told them that since the kingdom of heaven was near, this was a reason why they should “repent;” they could not become loyal and obedient subjects of that kingdom unless they gave up their sins and became better men. The preaching of His apostles was substantially the same as His own. Wherever they went they said, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

At the beginning of His Sermon on the Mount He described the blessings which the kingdom of heaven would bring to mankind and the persons that would receive these blessings.

The founders of ordinary kingdoms try to surround themselves with bold, courageous, and daring men; and to these they promise a share with themselves in the honour and wealth which are to be won by success-

ful ambition ; but Christ says that His kingdom is to be the inheritance of "the poor in spirit" and of those who are "persecuted for righteousness' sake;" and that under His reign the "meek" are to be the masters and rulers of the world. His kingdom is to bring comfort to those that "mourn" and satisfaction to those that "hunger and thirst"—not for gold and for places of power, but for "righteousness." Its riches and honours are to be the inheritance of the merciful and the kindly, of those that heal quarrels and make peace ; the "merciful" are to "obtain mercy;" the "peace-makers" are to be called "the children of God." To the "pure in heart" He promises perfect blessedness : "they shall see God."

But every kingdom has its own laws, and a kingdom so unique as this must have laws equally unique. When the Jews were organised into a State they received the Ten Commandments and a very remarkable civil and ecclesiastical polity. In the Sermon on the Mount the Lord Jesus Christ made known what kind of laws were to have force in the new kingdom for which the Jews had been hoping so long and which was now about to be established. Some of these laws He places in vivid contrast with the laws of Judaism ; but He is careful to say that He has not come to "destroy" the old law, but to "fulfil" it. The fruit takes the place of the blossom, but fulfils the purpose for which the blossom appeared and gives to the life of the blossom its complete form and expression ; and so in Christ, all that God had revealed to the human

race in earlier ages, all that He had done for the human race in earlier ages, is consummated and perfected.

When Christ delivered this great Sermon the kingdom of God was "near;" but just before He ascended into heaven He told His friends and disciples that "all power" was given to Him in heaven and on earth, and that therefore they were to make all nations His disciples; they were to claim all men as His subjects by baptizing them, and they were to teach all men to keep His commandments. The difference which this announcement made in the preaching of the apostles is remarkable, and is, perhaps, not sufficiently observed. After His ascension they never told men that the kingdom of heaven was "at hand." They said that Christ was already the "Prince" as well as the "Saviour" of men; that He was reigning by Divine right. They said that He was a Prince of infinite mercy and had died for our sins; but that still He was the Moral Ruler of the race—not merely a great prophet or an example of righteousness. His authority was implied whenever the apostles preached in His name the forgiveness of sins; for only the moral Ruler of men can have power to forgive moral offences. To bring men to the acknowledgment of Christ's authority, which they described as "the obedience of faith," was the object of apostolic preaching. They told men to trust in Christ for the pardon of sin and the gift of eternal life; but the trust included the concession of all Christ's claims. To have

refused to receive the laws of Christ while professing to rely on Him for the fulfilment of His promises would have been wholly inconsistent with the apostolic conception of faith.

These laws of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount are, therefore, the laws of our conduct, for they are the laws of the kingdom of heaven to which all Christian men have consented to belong. I wonder how it is that parts of this Sermon are not written on the walls of churches instead of the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments were given to the Jews, and would be very properly written on the walls of a synagogue ; but we are not Jews ; we are Christians, and the laws which we have to obey are the laws of the kingdom of Christ. We learn what some of them are from this great discourse ; and we also learn from it how we are to discover other laws—equally authoritative—which Christ has not explicitly revealed in His teaching.

For Christ's method of legislation as well as the legislation itself was unique. The text supplies an excellent example of His characteristic manner. He recognises the fact that there are laws which men who are not His loyal subjects acknowledge and obey. The "publicans" were Jews, but very bad Jews. They knew the laws of Moses, but were regarded by the religious people of Christ's days as apostates. But even the publicans *loved those that loved them*. This idea of duty—good, as far as it goes—the very outcasts of the nation accepted, and their irreligion did

not prevent them from fulfilling it. There were duties which even heathen men discharged: "If ye salute your brethren only"—if you are kindly to those only who are your own flesh and blood—"what do ye *more* than others? Do not even the heathen so?"

Christ gives these as examples of moral duties which were so plain and elementary that they were recognised and observed by the very worst men among the Jews and by the heathen themselves. That His disciples were to be no better than heathen men and publicans was not to be imagined. In His teaching about the kingdom of heaven these rudimentary ideas of morality were taken for granted; the laws on which He insisted required a loftier righteousness.

I say that in Christ's teaching the common and obvious laws of conduct are taken for granted. He does not release us from the duty of loving our friends; but He adds a new obligation—we are also to love our enemies. He does not release us from the duty of being kind and courteous to our own "brethren;" but he requires us to be kind and courteous to all men. The righteousness of Christ's disciples is to include the righteousness of irreligious men and of heathen men; but is to go beyond it. This is the principle which is implied throughout this discourse.

It is hardly necessary, indeed, to sustain this principle by invoking the authority of a text. We Christian people always assume that the laws of Christian morality are immeasurably superior to any laws of morality known to the heathen; and there are many

of us who are accustomed to maintain that apart from religion there can be no morality at all. The second of these opinions I need not discuss to-night. About the first we are all so far agreed as to believe that if we are Christian men our righteousness—I mean the righteousness at which we aim, and which in some measure we achieve—should not be inferior, at any point or in any of the relations of life, to the righteousness which was the aim of the very best and noblest of the heathen.

It must, therefore, be a useful practice to consider sometimes the ideas of duty which were recognised by ancient heathen moralists ; and as we dwell upon one element of virtue after another which the natural conscience discovered, we should say to ourselves, *This*, of course, must be mine—and more ; for if I am satisfied with *this*, Christ will say to me, What are you doing more than others ? the heathen have done the same. Those who assume that, apart from the Bible, there can be no knowledge of moral duty, and that therefore those who have no Christian faith are always indifferent to moral obligations, are likely to be satisfied with morals of a very inferior and ignoble kind. If they conscientiously strive to cultivate any common virtue and to suppress any common vice, they will think that this is a most decisive proof that they are loyal to Christ. It is easy to persuade ourselves that we are doing “more than others,” if we think that others are doing little or nothing.

And so I sometimes turn to one and another of the

ancient writers on morals, and consider their ideas of duty ; and I find in their writings very much that is worth thinking about. Here, for instance, is one of the maxims of Epictetus—

“It is possible that you observe some other person more honoured than yourself ; invited to entertainments when you are left out ; saluted before you are taken any notice of ; thought more proper to advise with, and his counsel followed rather than yours. But are these forms of respect which are paid to him good or evil ? If they deserve to be esteemed good, this ought to be matter of joy to you that that person is happy in them ; but if they be evil, how unreasonable is it to be troubled that they have not fallen to your own share.”¹

That was how a heathen moralist thought we ought to regard the honours paid to other men. I want to know whether many of us have passed far beyond him ? If we consider our social life and our political and philanthropic movements, is it quite clear that we Christian Englishmen are in advance of this ancient Roman slave ? We are accustomed to point to our hospitals as conspicuous proofs of the new and nobler spirit with which the Christian faith has inspired modern civilisation. We have a right to claim them as the creations of that compassion by which Christ

¹ This is Dean Stanhope's translation, with some slight modifications ; and, since it is freer than Mr. Long's, was more suitable for quotation in a popular discourse. Mr. Long's translation reads thus :—“Has any man been preferred before you at a banquet, or in being saluted, or in being invited to a consultation ? If these things are good, you ought to rejoice that he has obtained them ; but if bad, be not grieved because you have not obtained them.”

Himself was moved when He looked upon human suffering—a compassion which reappears in all who are His true disciples. But suppose Epictetus could come back into the world again and give us his judgment on the temper which is sometimes developed in the management of these institutions—monuments, as they are, of the infinite pity and mercy of the Son of God—is it quite certain that he would have to acknowledge that Christian men never need to be reminded of the precept which he gave to his heathen fellow-countrymen about the way in which they should regard those who are more honoured than themselves? When a new treasurer to a hospital is appointed, does it never happen that the man who expected the office and has not got it, has to be coaxed, caressed, and flattered to prevent him from going off the committee and from withdrawing his subscription?

We say, as we have a right to say, that unselfish devotion to the public service is a beautiful illustration of the Christian law, "Look not every man on his own things, but also on the things of others." But suppose Epictetus knew all about our political and municipal life. Do we feel quite sure that he would tell us that his precept had become quite unnecessary, because in these Christian times we have reached a perfection of unselfishness which his heathen morals had never dared to enjoin? Does it not sometimes happen that a man who has professed the most fervent enthusiasm for the principles of his party turns sulky because he is not run for the

Town Council, or because he is asked to second the third resolution at a great public meeting when he thinks he ought to have been asked to move the first, or at least to second it, or because a younger and poorer man than himself has been put in the chair?

Even in our religious institutions and in our churches the same spirit is sometimes shown. Men who are really loyal to Christ become bitter because their vanity has been wounded, their ambition thwarted, their dignity slighted. They complain of the malignant influence of imaginary cliques and secret confederacies which has deprived them of their rightful honours. Now and then an excellent Congregationalist is annoyed and irritated because he has not been elected deacon; and I suppose that Methodist ministers have known zealous Methodists who have taken offence because they have not been made circuit stewards; and perhaps clergymen could tell us of Churchmen who talked of turning Dissenters because they were not asked to hand round the plate at an important collection, or because they were not made churchwardens. The remarkable thing is that the people who are guilty of this baseness justify it—justify it openly—are not ashamed to talk of their wrongs to every one they meet in the street. They are unconscious of their fault. They think that they “do well to be angry.” Their ideas of morality, to say nothing of their practice, are inferior to the ideas of a heathen slave.

Take another of the maxims of Epictetus—

“ My duty to my father is to assist and take care of him ; to support his age and his infirmities ; to yield to him and pay him service and respect upon all occasions. . . . But you will say he is a rigorous and unnatural father. What is that to the purpose ? You are to remember, this obligation to duty does not arise from the consideration of his goodness, but from the relation he bears to you. No failings of his can make him cease to be a father, and consequently none can absolve you from the obedience of a son. Your brother has done you an injury ; but do not suppose that this dispenses with the kindness you owe him. You are still to observe what becomes *you* ; not to imitate what misbecame *him*.”¹

I think that I have known Christian men and women who have supposed that the harshness of a parent relieved them from their obligations as children, and that the injury they had received from a brother justified them in showing an unbrotherly and unsisterly spirit. Christ assumes that our standard of moral duty ought always to be loftier than that which exists among those who have never heard of His teaching. If, without self-reproach, we permit ourselves to indulge in a spirit which even heathen moralists condemned, how can we answer His question, What do ye more than others ?

¹ “ Duties are universally measured by relations. Is a man a father ? The precept is to take care of him, to yield to him in all things, to submit when he is reproachful, when he inflicts blows. But suppose that he is a bad father. Were you then by nature made akin to a good father ? No ; but to a father. Does a brother wrong you ? Maintain then your own position towards him, and do not examine what he is doing, but what you must do that your will may be conformable to nature.”—*Mr. Long's Translation.*

Epictetus was originally a Greek slave ; let us turn to a man of another sort—Marcus Antoninus the Roman emperor.

“A branch,” he says, “cut off from the adjacent branch must of necessity be cut off from the whole tree also. So, too, a man, when he is separated from another man, has fallen off from the whole social community.”

How many of us have a profounder conception than the heathen emperor of the duty of avoiding personal quarrels, of suppressing the vanity, the resentment, the wilfulness and selfishness by which we might be separated from our neighbour and so cut off from the life of the race ?

Take his caution against forming hard judgments of others. He says, what is true in innumerable cases—

“Thou dost not even understand whether men are doing wrong or not, for many things are done with a certain reference to circumstances. And, in short, a man must learn a great deal to enable him to pass a correct judgment on another man’s acts.”

I wonder whether most of us, before passing hard judgments on others, remember how much we must know, before we can judge them fairly ?

Here is another maxim—

“Whatever any one else does or says, *I* must be good—just as if the gold, or the emerald, or the purple were always saying this—‘Whatever any one does or says *I* must keep my colour. It is royal to do good and to be abused.’”

Some of you are masters ; do you see clearly that whatever your servants “do or say” you must be

always just and kind and considerate to them? Some of you are workmen; have you made up your minds that you must always be good workmen, no matter whether you have a good master or a bad master; that you must serve a bad master as faithfully and as zealously as you serve a good one? And whatever our position may be, is it the constant temper of our mind to "do good," whether we are praised for it or not—to "do good" even when we are "abused" for doing it?

Again—

"If any man is able to convince me and shew me that I do not think or act right, I will gladly change; for I seek the truth, by which no man was ever injured. But he is injured who abides in his error and ignorance."

It is not my experience that many Christian people cultivate this noble spirit.

He gathers together in a sentence the principal virtues for which he thinks men ought to strive—"sincerity, gravity, endurance of labour, aversion to pleasure"—a temper which we, as God's thankful children, should qualify, unless by pleasure is meant pleasure of the baser kind; for the conditions and sources of happiness are God's good gifts, and when these are ours we ought to be happy; indeed, Antoninus himself acknowledges this. But let us hear the rest of his list: "Contentment with thy portion and with few things, benevolence, frankness, no love of superfluity, freedom from trifling, magnanimity." This is a noble catalogue, and yet, since we believe that Christian

morality is loftier than the loftiest heathen morality, our moral code must include all these virtues and more.

It will not do to say that heathen men only talked about these great duties and did not practise them. For Antoninus gives us an account of some of his relatives and friends and teachers in whose character and conduct he saw these virtues illustrated, and he tells us that he learnt to love and honour the great qualities which seemed to him necessary to the good man, through seeing their beauty and nobleness in the actual lives of those whom he had been so fortunate as to know.¹ It appears, therefore, that if we achieved all these excellences the Lord Jesus Christ might remind us of some heathen men, and ask us, "What do ye more than others? Have not the heathen done the same?"

But what I am especially anxious to insist upon just now is that in the writings of heathen moralists there are maxims inculcating virtues which some Christian people have never thought of trying to attain. Their moral standard is so defective that in many points they are inferior to heathen men in their conceptions of duty. Christ assumes that His servants will be at least as clear-sighted as the heathen, and that the virtues which the heathen honoured we shall honour, and He goes on to require more. However

¹ No doubt the kindly emperor took an optimistic view of the virtues of other men, but this does not destroy, though it may lessen, the worth of his testimony.

we may explain it, we are obliged to acknowledge that some of the heathen were clearer-sighted than some of ourselves.

In the apostolic epistles, indeed, most of which were written to Churches which were largely formed of heathen men, and of heathen men of a base sort—for “not many wise, not many noble were called”—some of the elementary virtues had to be inculcated. St. Paul had to rebuke the Christians at Corinth for sanctioning a form of immorality which the very heathen regarded as shameful; and this fact, by the way, is an ominous warning against the moral conceit of those Christian people of our own times who are fully persuaded that because they believe in Christ their morality must be, in every respect, superior to that of the rest of the world. It is clearly possible for Christian men to do things that are morally disgraceful without knowing it. The First Epistle to the Corinthians shows that the conscience of unbelievers may, in some points, be healthier and truer than the conscience of a believer. To every one that has watched human life with an open and candid mind this statement is one of the commonest of commonplaces; but, perhaps, there are some persons who will regard it with more consideration when supported by an appeal to the Bible.

To return from this digression. Christ, I say, generally assumes that such virtues as those on which Antoninus insists will be practised by all Christians. Listen to the catalogue again: sincerity, gravity,

endurance of labour, what we call superiority to pleasure, contentment with our condition and with moderate resources, benevolence, frankness, the absence of a love of superfluities, freedom from trifling, magnanimity. Christ assumes that these virtues will be ours, and if we are content with these, He will ask, "What *do* ye more than others?"—Not, What do you *believe* more than others? Not, What do you *feel* more than others? But, What *do* ye more than others? He expects more; He demands more.

It is nothing to the purpose to reply that you attend worship and that others spend the Sunday at home; that you pray to God and that others neglect prayer; that you read the Bible and that others never read it; that you teach in a Sunday school, and contribute to missionary societies;—all these things are admirable; but Christ was thinking of morals; that is, of conduct towards other men. He meant that we have a higher moral law, and that we ought to keep it.

What this higher law is, in all its applications, we have to learn; and we learn it very gradually; it is one of the great subjects about which Christian men should be always learning. Christ has not given us a complete code, but He has given us specimens of the contrast between this higher law and the common laws recognised by ordinary men. "Thou shalt not kill"—this was a law which was already acknowledged as authoritative; Christ quotes it with the penalty, "whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment," and then adds, "But I say unto you, that whosoever is

angry with his brother [without a cause] shall be in danger of the judgment, and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council ; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire ;" and Christ, therefore, says that to atone for a wrong which we have done to a fellow man is a duty taking precedence of a sacrifice that we may be intending to offer to God. Men knew that they ought not to swear false oaths. The recognised law was good as far as it went ; but Christ says that we are to be so truthful as to make oaths unnecessary. It was a recognised law that men should love their neighbours ; as for their enemies, these they might hate ; but He takes the law and transfigures it : " I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you ; that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven ; for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." " Either these sayings are not Christ's or we are not Christians," was the exclamation of a great man after reading these words.

We have to work out the whole code of Christian morals in the light of this teaching. This is the method of the new science. We have to take the virtues which are recognised as virtues by all the world—honesty, industry, kindness, temperance, the spirit of cheerful contentment with our condition—and we have to learn for ourselves the larger requirements

of Christ in relation to every one of them. The Spirit of Christ, if we seek His guidance, will lead us into all the truth. Every Christian man must be left very much to the guidance of the Spirit in these high matters. We can do something to help each other, but not very much. I should have to be a draper to learn what a Christian draper should do "more" than other honest drapers ; and a carpenter to learn what a Christian carpenter should do "more" than other good carpenters ; and a banker to learn what a Christian banker should do "more" than other upright bankers. The root of the whole matter lies in the fact that we are the servants of Christ and that very much of the service we render to Christ consists in the service we render to our fellow men, whether we are ministers, lawyers, mechanics, clerks, house-maids, milliners, merchants, or tradesmen. If we are zealous to please Christ we shall find many ways of doing it of which some of us, perhaps, have no conception ; and this will result in nobler ideas of moral duty in all the common affairs of life.

Among grave and earnest men who still retain a deep impression of the great days of the Evangelical Revival, there is sadness and regret because in our days the lines between the Church and the world are so faint and uncertain. No doubt this is a serious evil. If those lines disappear, if they are not strongly marked, the life and energy of the Church must be decaying. How is the evil to be remedied ?

Some think that Christian men should avoid amuse-

ments which are described as "worldly." It is clear that if we are indulging in any amusements which are vicious or which lessen our devoutness, or corrupt the simplicity of our moral and religious life, or diminish our ardour in the service of Christ, the amusements should be given up. About this we are all agreed.

Some think that we are too reserved about our loyalty to Christ, and that we are cowardly in asserting His authority over those who do not acknowledge Him as their Prince and Saviour. There can be no doubt that most Englishmen are reserved on these great topics—more reserved than Frenchmen, more reserved than Americans ; and of all Englishmen we Independents are, perhaps, specially chargeable with this fault. It is hard to escape from our traditions, and our traditions are a severe restraint on frank speech about religious faith and duty. We shrink from speaking to those who would welcome with heartiest sympathy whatever we have to say ; it is no wonder that we shrink from showing that we are on Christ's side where it would provoke antagonism. There is a curious difference between ourselves and the Americans. When I was in America I often found it hard to get a man to tell me whether he was opposed to Mr. Hayes's government or for it ; but I never found it hard to discover whether a man had religious faith ; men told me this without my asking. Most Americans seemed to me reserved about their politics but frank about their religion ; we are frank about our politics but reserved

about our religion. The reserve is unnatural ; it represses the freedom and vigour of the religious life, and it should be abandoned.

But if the Church is separated from the world only or chiefly by the abstinence of Christian people from certain amusements, or by the frankness with which they speak about religion, the separation will be very ineffective. I want to see a separation of a far more decisive kind ; I want to see a separation of the kind which Christ Himself demanded: "Let your light . . . shine before men, that they may see your *good works* and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

While many other men, in their business transactions, keep only just within the limits of the law which is administered by human tribunals, let Christian men be governed by the rules of a diviner equity. While many other men do public work as long as they are honoured for doing it, let Christian men go on doing it whether they are honoured or not, accepting it as the service to which God has appointed them. While many other men are quick to take offence, and leave the committee of a hospital or cut off their subscription, if their personal importance is not recognised, let Christian men rise into a clearer heaven, far above these petty, personal interests, and work and give for Christ's sake. While many other men concede grudgingly the honour which is due to the work which has been done by those with whom they are associated, afraid that their own merits might be forgotten if too much were ascribed to their colleagues,

let Christian men be prompt and generous in acknowledging the services of others and leave their own services for a diviner reward. Let the Christian manufacturer recognise the Higher Law, in the quality of his goods, in his treatment of his partners and his men, and in his careful avoidance of whatever personal extravagances and whatever commercial risks and speculations might prevent him from paying his debts. Let the Christian builder be so exact in doing his work according to the specifications that his employers shall feel that a clerk of the works is a useless expense. Let the Christian carpenter and engine-fitter make the eye of the foreman unnecessary. Let the Christian clerk be the best clerk in the office, taking more pains than any other man there, more ready to meet with cheerful industry any unusual pressure of business, more loyal to his principal, less careful about himself. That is the right way of dividing the Church from the world.

Do you reply that there is nothing unworldly, nothing spiritual, in this kind of contrast between those who are Christians and those who are not? If you reflect, you will see that no stronger illustration of unworldliness and spirituality is possible. When a man's faith in the Unseen and Eternal is so vivid, so powerful, so constant, that his common work is done under the control of the Divine law and under the inspiration of loyalty to Christ, there is a crowning proof that though in the world he is not of it.

But perhaps some of you will say that conduct of

this kind will prevent you from getting on in the world ; that if you act in the way I have described you will make money slowly ; that if you do not push to the front and keep yourself there, you will never get your value recognised. There is a great deal, no doubt, in that objection ; the objection seems to show that the life I sketched is really an unworldly life.

Yes, the objection is a solid one ; and I will not urge, in reply, that as a rule, and in the long run, the clerk who thinks least of himself and most of his employer is surest of promotion, his other qualifications being adequate ; or that the mechanic who thinks most of his work and least of his wages is surest of being kept in the shop when work is slack ; or that the manufacturer whose goods can be always relied upon is surest to get the best kind of trade ; or that the master who treats his men best is surest to get the best workmen ; or that the merchant who is most careful to avoid wild speculations is surest to be trusted ; or that the public man who is least disposed to insist on his own claims to honour is surest, if he is worth anything, to have his services acknowledged—though all this is true. But, as I have said, it is true only as a rule and in the long run. It sometimes—perhaps often—happens otherwise. A man who is useful to his employer may get his claims met sooner and more generously by self-assertion than by simply doing his duty. In our modern commercial life the audacious, venturesome trader, the manufacturer who spends very much more time and strength

in pushing his goods outside his works than in attending to their honest production inside, often rises rapidly, and is able to crush all the quiet, honest men about him.

The real reply—the Christian reply—to your objection is, that it is not your business to get on in the world, to make money, to have your worth recognised ; but to serve God. You cannot serve both God and mammon. You must make your choice. If you accept the Christian law you must obey it, whatever comes—wealth or poverty, neglect or honour. This is what is meant by self-denial, and by taking up our cross and following Christ. We have to put His Will first and His Will last ; we have to care for Christ's commandments and to leave Him to care for our interests.

The history of Christendom contains many illustrations of one steadfast law. In all real and permanent religious reformations there has been not only a fresh and firmer grasp of some great spiritual truths and a nearer access to the living God, but also a positive advance in morality. Protestantism was a vehement assault on the immoralities of Rome as well as on its errors and superstitions ; and it vindicated and reasserted the Christian ideal of family life. Puritanism, though to superficial persons it may seem to have been a struggle against surplices and crosses and painted windows and bishops, was, in reality, a great struggle for righteousness. It was the idea of a Divine righteousness which made Cromwell's army

victorious on every battle-field, so that he was able to say at the close of the war that his own men had never been beaten. You remember Macaulay's testimony to them when the Restoration came—

“Fifty thousand men accustomed to the profession of arms were at once thrown on the world, and experience seemed to warrant the belief that this change would produce much misery and crime ; that the discharged veterans would be seen begging in every street, or that they would be driven by hunger to pillage. But no such result followed. The Royalists themselves confessed that, in every department of honest industry, the discarded warriors prospered beyond other men, that none was charged with any theft or robbery, that none was heard to ask an alms, and that if a baker, a mason, or a waggoner attracted notice by his diligence and sobriety, he was in all probability one of Oliver's old soldiers.”

And the Evangelical Revival of the last century accomplished a great reformation in the morals of this country. It made thieves honest, drunkards sober ; it reclaimed fallen women ; foul lusts were burnt out of the hearts of men by the fierce fires of repentance and by the gentler yet keener flames of the Divine love. Its purifying power reached the higher classes of English society as well as the lower : it made the lives of people of rank and title cleaner, gentler, and more wholesome. It originated and inspired innumerable works of charity.

That great movement seems to have spent its strength ; and we are now concerned that religious faith has not a more powerful hold on the English people. Many of us are longing for some fresh revelation of the power and love of God. We think of White-

field and the Wesleys and of the men who shared their labour and their glory. We wonder whether such preachers, such saints, will appear again. But suppose we resolved to discover for ourselves the true meaning of the laws of Christ in relation to human conduct; suppose we were to make a great endeavour, in the strength of God, to obey those laws; is it not possible that in this way another Evangelical Revival might come which would be still better and still more enduring than the last? Great preachers are solitary lights, blazing at a distance, blazing for a time. "Let your light . . . shine before men"—in the common ways of life, all the week through—"that men may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." It may be that if it were preached in this way, the Gospel would be better understood and more deeply felt by the men of our times, than if the genius and the passion and the courage of the famous preachers of other generations came back again. This, at least, would be a fit and natural preparation for a nearer approach of God to man. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" was the form in which the news of Christ's immediate appearance was made known to the Jewish nation which had waited so many centuries for His coming. Perhaps if the modern Church listened to the same charge and obeyed it, Christ would again show, in wonderful ways, that He is near to man. However this may be, our duty is clear. Apart from a constant advance in morals there can be no growth

in the true life of the Church ; and apart from a constant advance in morals the Church can never hope to conquer the world. The miracles of early ages have passed away ; and in our times the Church must vindicate the Divine authority of its message to mankind by a morality nobler in idea and nobler in fact than that which prevails where the Christian faith is rejected or unknown.

IV.

THE EDUCATION OF THE CONSCIENCE.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are worthy of honour and reverence, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report—or, rather, winning and attractive—whatever moral virtue there is, and whatever there is worthy of praise—think on these things.—PHIL. iv. 8.

ST. PAUL means that the mind of a Christian man is to be the home of noble, lovely, and heroic conceptions of moral character and conduct. Rich people who have a fine taste do not spend all their money in horses and carriages, and in costly wines and luxurious furniture; they cover their walls with pictures recalling to them the beauty, the mystery, the glory, the loveliness, the pathos, and the strength which artists have discovered in external nature or in the life of man—quiet glens, wild moorlands, hayfields with the sunlight on them, granite cliffs rising out of a restless sea, forests in autumn, clouds at sunset, Spanish peasants, the Bedouin in the desert, the mosques of Cairo, the courts of the Alhambra; and imperishable marbles record for them the ideas of energy and grace which have haunted the genius of great sculptors.

All this is far beyond the reach of most of us. But the galleries of memory and imagination, the secret chambers of the heart, how are these filled? Are they vacant? That is impossible. Perhaps they are occupied with anything that happens to be carried into them, noble or ignoble, charming or repulsive, precious or worthless.

The very poorest of us may fill the mind with forms of immortal majesty and beauty; and this is what St. Paul tells us to do in the text.

Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are worthy of honour and reverence, whatsoever things are pure, lovely, charming, whatever virtue there is, whatever there is worthy of praise, we are to think of these things. These are the paintings with which the walls of the mind are to be hung, these the costly marbles, these the priceless gems, which we are to collect from all countries and from all ages and make our own.

This is the way in which we are to learn what goodness is. Just as the artistic taste is refined and invigorated by familiarity with excellent works of art, so the moral taste is made more sensitive, is purified and ennobled, by familiarity with admirable forms of moral goodness. And not only do we learn what goodness is by thinking about whatever is true and just and lovely; if there is life and health in our moral nature, thoughts about goodness tend to make us actually good.

This reminds us of what, perhaps, many of us need to be reminded of—the harm which we are in danger of

receiving from familiarity with gross and evil things. It is hardly possible for our thoughts to be occupied with what is base and foul and false and unjust without being the worse for it. The reports contained in some newspapers of the details of crimes spread contagion through the country. Every one that reads them may not suffer ; every one that rides in a cab which has taken a scarlet fever patient to a hospital does not catch scarlet fever ; but where there is susceptibility to the disease the mischief is done. Works of fiction which are full of the struggles of passion, or which detain the mind through page after page in the company of cynical, selfish, scheming, ignoble characters, are equally mischievous. It is nothing to the purpose to say that virtue is triumphant at the end of the third volume, and that the bad people get their deserts. The evil lies in having the thoughts occupied with the bad deeds and the bad thoughts of bad people all through the three volumes until the last chapter is reached. Writers of fiction do no service to morality by merely making their villains suffer at last ; if they want to serve morality they must make goodness attractive and lovely from the beginning of the story to the end. Our books are our friends : this is true of books of all kinds ; but the novel writer, in a very special sense, gives us friends to live with, and some of them remain our friends long after we have finished the story and put the book aside. Just as I do not care to have dirty, foul, drunken, coarse people in my house, so I do not care to come into contact with such people in

fiction. Their breath pollutes the air, and I want a bath after I have touched them.

It is possible to take harm from what may disguise itself as a philanthropic interest in the moral condition of society. There are many people who have what seems to me a morbid curiosity about the temptations, the vicious habits of life, and the sufferings of the most abandoned women and the most profligate men. God forbid that I should utter a word in disparagement of the courage and compassion of those who have investigated the darkest and filthiest forms of human life in order to rescue and save the lost. It is necessary for the health of our towns that some men should live in the sewers, and they render us a service for which we should honour them—a hard and disgusting service ; but it is not necessary that every one of us should go down into the sewers with them, and if we did, we should probably suffer for it. It is necessary, if those who are living a vicious life are to be reclaimed, that some noble and generous men and women should make themselves acquainted with their evil lives ; but if for the mere sake of satisfying curiosity those of us who cannot share their work fill our minds with this repulsive knowledge, the knowledge will injure us. Those who are at work are kept safe by the fires of their Divine charity ; those who are not at work have no such protection.

The apostolic precept seems to have been strangely altered by some people. In their novels, in their newspaper reading, and in what they suppose to be their

philanthropy, they take it as though he had written, "Whatsoever things are gross and brutal and violent and impure, if there be any vice, if there be any shame, think on these things." Their minds, instead of being galleries of art, in which they have collected beautiful pictures and noble statues, all forms of moral grace and purity and loveliness, are rather like a medical museum which I went through some years ago—a dreadful place—with wax models of all the hideous and disgusting deformities from which human nature suffers. I could not get the horrible things out of my memory for weeks. I have not quite got rid of them yet. Be sure of it, St. Paul's method is the true one.

His precept reminds me of the mischievous kind of moral training which was common when I was a child, and which, I am afraid, is too common still.

Some parents, and some teachers, think that they train their children admirably if they talk to them about their faults. The way in which they talk to them varies with the temper of the teacher and parent. Some talk affectionately and with a deep sense of pain for the offence which has been committed ; some talk angrily ; some with hard severity. Now, of course, it is necessary to talk to children, and to grown people too, about their faults—I have to talk to you about yours—but that is a very small part of moral training. A tree wants pruning now and then, and the sharp knife, run through the too luxuriant growths, makes the wood stronger and the fruit richer ; a child wants

medicine now and then, and if the medicine is wisely given the child is better for it. But if the tree is to be healthy and vigorous, it wants something besides pruning ; it must have good soil for its roots, good air to breathe, kindly rains and sunshine. And if a child is to be healthy and vigorous, it wants something besides Dover's powder and castor oil ; no child ever became strong on physic ; it wants wholesome food, healthy exercise, occupation for its mind, and plenty of sleep. What would happen to your children if you were careful only about their medicine and not about their breakfasts and dinners—never sent them out into the open air, and left them to go to bed at what time they liked ? But morally, I am afraid that some teachers and parents give their children nothing except physic and the cane. No wonder they do not thrive ; no wonder they are puny, have a weak constitution, and are liable to catch all sorts of moral diseases.

And even if, when they have committed a fault, you do something more than reprove them, if you speak to them in glowing words about virtue and goodness, do not imagine that you have done enough. The children who are never reminded of duty except when they have done wrong will probably hate the very idea of duty, and will feel nothing of its loveliness, nothing of its kindly though rigorous obligations. Never speak to a child about generosity except when it has been guilty of selfishness, and it will not feel the charm of generosity, it will rather think of all the

excuses for not being generous. Never speak to it about industry except when it has been unusually idle, and instead of having an enthusiasm for work it will rather think of the irksomeness of work and the pleasantness of indolence. Give your children food as well as physic, and do not always give food and physic together.

The negative morality in which many of us were trained has exerted a blighting and paralysing influence over our whole moral life. We suffer from it just as we suffer from having been incessantly dosed with medicine. In the moral character of some of us there is a certain valetudinarian element for which there seems no specific. Our moral ideas are permanently narrowed and debased. In consequence of having been subjected to this miserable treatment, there are many people who misread the text on which I was preaching last Sunday, who do not seem to understand that they are to do *more* than others, to have more positive goodness; but who think that Christianity consists in doing *less* than others, in avoiding wrong things of which others are guilty.

This is one of the great evils of the modern Church. We have innumerable Christian people whose character must be painted in neutral tints. There is nothing very bad to be said about them, but there is nothing very good. The pages of their life are not like a blotted copy-book, but they are like a copy-book full of blank leaves. They think that life is a success if they do no harm. They do not bear poisonous berries

—they bear no fruit at all ; and they forget that it was the *barren* fig-tree which Christ cursed.

Neutral tints in morals,—we meet them incessantly. Here is a man who always keeps sufficiently near the truth to make it certain that you will never be able to prove him a liar ; but there is nothing frank and open in him. Here is another who never does a very mean thing, but he is never kindly and generous. Here is another who is never rough and rude, but he is never gracious and hearty. You find the same thing everywhere. Have you men of business no clerks in your office, no assistants in your shops, no men in your works, of the kind I am thinking of ? They have no glaring faults, nothing on which you can lay your finger and say, “ This won’t do.” There is nothing flagrantly wrong about them, and in fact this is what provokes you. If you make a complaint they have always an answer ready. It seems hard to dismiss them without a reason, and you cannot find a reason in any definite failure in duty. They are not so bad as to make it clear that you must send them away, and yet they are hardly worth keeping. Now I want to say to these clerks, assistants, workmen, that this negative kind of goodness ought not to satisfy themselves any more than it satisfies their employers. They should set their hearts on a goodness of a more positive, living, energetic kind. Let them be anxious not only to avoid blame, but, if by any increase of zeal and industry they can deserve praise, then, whether they get the praise or not, let them de-

termine to deserve it. The same principle is to be accepted by all of us throughout the whole range of our moral life. The harvest is coming on—the harvest of God ; it is not enough that we bear no evil fruit—where are the ripe, rich clusters of positive goodness? Day by day, page after page of our life is being turned over, and we shall soon have to hand in the book for the Divine judgment on it ; it is not enough that the pages are free from great blots—what are we writing on them which it will be worth while for God to look at? What are we doing which will enable Him to say, “ *Well done, good and faithful servant* ” ?

It is clearly not *religious* duty, as distinguished from ordinary moral duty, that requires our care. When Paul wrote this precept he was thinking of what we call morality rather than of religion. There is not much room for *justice* in saying your prayers and in reading the Bible ; it is in intercourse with your fellow-men on common days that you are to be just, true, pure, honourable, gracious, amiable ; and these are the virtues which Paul says we have to think about and to practise.

But what are these things? How are we to know what is just and lovely and honourable and virtuous? That question sends us back over part of the ground across which we travelled in the two previous sermons.

You will remember that in the first sermon of this course I insisted on the dignity and authority of what we call the natural conscience, tried to show that

there is a law written in the heart, that even in the absence of revelation man recognises the existence of a distinction between good and evil, condemns some things as morally wrong, approves other things as morally right; and I pointed out the infidelity of refusing to believe in this universal revelation. I further insisted on the necessity of educating this faculty and of developing the delight of which we are naturally capable in righteousness and in moral goodness and beauty.

Last Sunday evening we began to consider some of the elements of *Christian* morality; and we had at the outset to meet the question whether Christ set aside the natural conscience, dethroned it, declared its functions obsolete, and gave positive laws to guide our life and conduct instead of that inward perception of right and wrong which is native to the human soul.

We found that He recognised the moral ideas of heathen men and irreligious men, but taught that His disciples were to have nobler conceptions of duty and to illustrate them in their conduct. The law which men discover by what we call the light of nature, but which is more justly called the light of God in the soul of man, is good as far as it goes; but Christ asks His disciples, "What do ye more than others?" He does not, however, put a set of rules in place of conscience. There is no complete code of morals in the New Testament. You cannot find definite precepts to tell you what is right and wrong in all the details of life. In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ illustrates

His idea of the higher law which His disciples ought to obey ; but He illustrates that law at only a few points and leaves very much to be discovered by ourselves. Conscience retains her functions. We must still come to see for ourselves what is right and what is wrong.

The apostles follow the same method as Christ. Take this precept. How were the Philippians to know what things were true, honourable, just, pure, lovely, winning ; what things were virtuous, what things deserved praise ? Paul does not give definitions ; he does not attempt to lay down rules. He assumes that the Philippian Christians would recognise for themselves what deserved moral respect and affection.

Some definite moral precepts, indeed, are given in the New Testament, but to apply them to all the details of conduct requires a trained and educated conscience. The method of education which Paul prescribes is in harmony with the general laws of human nature. To revert to an illustration which I have already employed—How do you educate men in art ? You send them to study great statues and famous pictures—statues and pictures which, by the consent of many countries and many generations, are noble and beautiful. But is the student educated if he simply copies them ? No ; the authority which declares them deserving of admiration is a reason for patient and reverential study ; but as he studies he must come to see for himself the nobleness and beauty of the works of the immortal

masters ; he must catch their spirit and their manner, or else he will have received no artistic culture from seeing them.

Something like this is true in morals. We find that there are forms of conduct which win universal affection and honour ; the admiration of many races and of many centuries bears witness to them ; the tradition of Christendom does homage to them ; some of these forms of conduct derive sanction from the teaching and example of Him who is the very fountain of the light that shines in our own souls. If our vision is not diseased and dim, these forms of moral beauty and greatness are generally recognised as beautiful and great as soon as we see them : they shine in their own brightness ; and if at first we do not recognise their righteousness and grace, still, by dwelling on them, we learn to reverence and love them. But it is necessary to dwell on them long, to think of them much, if we are to be so penetrated by their spirit as to be certain to see clearly our own highest duty in relation to the conduct of life.

I do not mean that Christ's only function is to educate the conscience. He is our moral Ruler, and to Him the laws to which conscience bears an imperfect testimony are known perfectly. In Him conscience recognises its Master and Lord. When we have discovered His supreme moral claims, it is our duty to obey His commandments, whether we see the moral grounds for them or not. To the Christian man Christ is his better and higher self—an Objective

Conscience. If Christ speaks very gravely of offences which seem to us comparatively light, we know that His judgment is true, and that the time will come when our judgment will coincide with His. If He condemns actions and habits in which we can recognise no evil, we are troubled that the light which shines within us is so dim, and are thankful that He has come to save us from the inadequacy of our conceptions of righteousness as well as to save us from eternal destruction. Unlike all other moral teachers, He does not merely instruct—He has authority to command. But in ethics, as well as in what is properly spiritual, His own words are fulfilled, “He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness.” Light comes to us as the reward of obedience. This is only one illustration of a law which affects our whole moral development. Children who are trained to speak the truth come to abhor and despise lying. Right moral practice leads to true moral judgments.

The functions of conscience are not suppressed by the supremacy of Christ. Conscience is His minister and ally. Christ is our Master, and yet He treats us as friends, not as slaves. As I have said already, He does not give us a complete formal code for the government of conduct; He trusts very largely to our own power of distinguishing between right and wrong, and one great object of His teaching is to make our moral vision keener.

I doubt whether most of those who have been formed by the faith and traditions of the Evangelical

movement are sufficiently impressed by the necessity of educating the conscience. "Make the tree good and the fruit will be good"—this seems to be their whole theory of morals. Let a man learn that he has sinned against God ; let him repent of sin ; let him trust in Christ for salvation ; and then all will come right. The divine life given in regeneration will show itself in all forms of Christian righteousness. "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, and neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." True. But even a good tree may bring forth very poor fruit if it receives no proper cultivation ; and it is certain that, however earnestly a man may mean to do well, he will do very badly if his conscience is uninstructed.

This partly explains how it is that some Christian people are worse men—morally—than some who are not Christians. The faculty of conscience requires a great deal of education if we are to distinguish between the right and the wrong in all the details of life. There are no rules in the Bible which can help us if the conscience is uneducated ; and there are some earnest religious men who take no trouble to educate it. They care very much for right views about the Divinity of Christ and about the Atonement, about Justification by Faith, and the New Birth, and Future Punishment ; they care still more for devotional sentiment of the right kind ; and it would be grossly unjust not to acknowledge that they also care a great deal about doing the will of God as far as they know it. The evil is that the education of their con-

science has been almost wholly neglected, and therefore the will of God is very imperfectly known.

Nothing can be more certain than that a man may have an honest desire to do right and may yet require very much moral instruction and discipline before his ideas of Christian righteousness can have any depth and nobleness. Take an extreme case. Here is a young man whose father was a thief and whose mother was a street-walker, and who lived till he was eighteen or nineteen years of age among the outcasts of society. What ideas of morality will he have—of honesty, truthfulness, purity? Suppose he is suddenly brought under the influence of Christ, sees that he has sinned and sinned terribly, repents, trusts in the infinite mercy of God, is forgiven, and begins to live a Christian life. There will be an immense change in him; but he will not know very much about religious truth as soon as he is converted, neither will he know very much about moral duty as soon as he is converted. He must learn about both. The grosser vices he will abandon. He will not get drunk; but do you think that he will be able even to understand what is meant by temperance in eating and drinking as you ought to understand it? I do not. He will not pay for his dinner by putting his hand into other people's pockets; but will you expect from him what we mean by a nice sense of justice and honour in all his transactions? If you do, you are monstrously unreasonable. He will not tell a downright lie; but do you suppose that when he is

hard pressed he will see that it is wrong to use words in a double sense, and to tell half the truth when he ought to tell the whole? Or do you think that he will see that it is not only his duty to say what he thinks, but to take care that he thinks right? For myself, I suppose nothing of the kind.

You can find irreligious men whose ideas of morality are far higher than those of this young man can possibly be—men who see more clearly than he is likely to see for years what it is to be temperate, honest, and truthful; and perhaps they will sneer at him and at his religion too, because their moral light is clearer than his. But what we claim for religion in relation to morals is not that as soon as a man is a Christian he will have nobler ideas of moral duty than every man who is, not a Christian, but that he will come under the influence of motives and teaching which will constrain him to make a supreme effort to become a better man morally than he was before—that he will receive Divine help to enable him to struggle with old vices and to discharge duties to which he was unequal. A morally bad man will begin to strive after goodness when he begins to serve Christ; a morally good man when he begins to serve Christ will strive after a higher goodness than that which satisfied him before. I have taken an extreme case; but it illustrates my meaning. It does not follow that because we are earnestly religious and want to do right we know exactly what the right is. We may be Christians and yet have

given so little attention to Christ's laws that we break the plainest of them without knowing it ; we may be Christians and yet have thought so little about whatsoever things are true, honourable, just, and lovely that men who are not Christians, but who have thought of these things, may have a clearer moral discernment than we have.

I wonder whether I have made this point plain : it is of immense practical importance. Let me try again. Suppose you were perplexed about your duty in some difficult commercial transactions and could not tell what it would be just and honourable for you to do. Where would you go for advice ? Here is an old lady in an almshouse ; she was a housemaid before she was married, soon lost her husband, went out as a charwoman for thirty years, and for twenty years has been in the almshouse. She is a woman of sense and an excellent Christian ; her morals are admirable ; she is truthful and cleanly, cheerful, contented, and kindly, notwithstanding her hardships and poverty. But will you ask her advice ? I think not. Her conscience has not been trained to deal with questions of right and wrong in the matters about which you are troubled. Here is a man with no religion ; but he has been at the head of a great firm for twenty years ; he is an able man ; he is a man of stainless character ; he has a large knowledge of affairs. You will go to him ; you feel that his judgment, if you can get it, will in all probability be not only perfectly just but in the highest sense honourable. His conscience

has been trained to recognise the honourable and the just in commercial transactions. He has no religious faith, but you value his moral discernment.

The position of our Churches is one of extreme difficulty. For more than a hundred years the Evangelical Churches of this country have been winning enormous accessions from those classes of the community whose condition and circumstances were very unfavourable to the development of true and lofty conceptions of moral duty. We have been saving the lost—thank God for it! When the great Evangelical Revival was losing its force and we ceased to bring great masses of people into our churches by our preaching, the Sunday school began to achieve its triumphs, and in nearly every Evangelical Nonconformist church in the country a large proportion of the Church members are men and women who have not inherited the precious traditions of a long line of upright and religious ancestors. Our moral discipline, our very conception of moral duty, depends so much upon the character and the temperament of those who gave us life, and upon the circumstances of childhood and youth, that not to have had parents with a physical nature trained to goodness, and with a vigorous love for whatsoever things are true, honourable, just, and lovely, is a loss that can hardly ever be compensated. It is especially in relation to morals that that excellent piece of advice of the ingenious German applies—"a man cannot be too careful in choosing his father and mother." But we

must do what we can ; and if we know that our parents, even though they were good people in their way, were not conspicuous for moral nobleness, for magnanimity, for all that is lovely and graceful in character, we may take it for granted that our own moral ideas are poor and narrow and need special cultivation and development.

We should welcome and reflect upon all illustrations of what is morally beautiful wherever we find it—in heathen or in Christian men, in the lives of those we know or in the history of the dead. We should take on our lips the ancient prayer, “Teach me Thy statutes. I am thy servant, give me understanding that I may know Thy testimonies.” We should catch the spirit which finds expression in the words, “Oh how I love Thy law—it is my meditation all the day.” Fidelity to every duty that we know, the desire to know our duty better, the habit of meditation on whatsoever things are true, honourable, just, lovely, virtuous, and deserving of praise, the earnest prayer for clearer light as well as for greater strength—these will make the enlargement of our moral knowledge certain, and will enable us to transmit to our descendants a nobler morality than we have received from those who have gone before us.

V.

THE NECESSITY OF DOING THE WILL OF GOD.

Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father who is in heaven.—MATT. vii. 21.

FROM these words there can be no appeal. Christ came to seek and to save the lost, to die, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God : those whom He excluded from heaven can have no hope of entering there. The position of the words in this discourse, and the menaces with which they are confirmed, invest them with great solemnity. The striking imagery in which our Lord proceeds to contrast the destiny of the men who keep His commandments with the destiny of the men who fail to keep them deepens the solemnity and makes it appalling. We must do the will of God if we hope to enter at last the kingdom of heaven.

We must *do* it. A great crowd of people had been listening to our Lord, and He knew that many of them were likely to go away and to live the kind of life they had lived before ; He warns them that if they did not keep the laws which He had given them, their listening to Him would be of no avail. I am afraid

that there are many in our own days who require the same warning.

Some of you, perhaps, suppose that you do enough to show that you are Christians if you come here on Sundays. You have not missed coming for twenty years except when you were away from home, or when you were unwell, or when the weather was very bad ; and you think with complacency of the regularity of your attendance. It is a duty, no doubt, to meet with the Christian Church to worship God and to learn all you can about God's will. But if you set off your regular attendance at worship on Sunday against the conscious neglect of any of God's laws during the week you commit a terrible mistake. One purpose for which you come here is to learn how to live elsewhere. It can be no excuse for breaking God's commandments on Monday that you made a great effort on Sunday—came a mile and a half through the wind and rain—to learn what God's commandments are. Suppose a man were caught trespassing in a gentleman's private grounds and when asked for a defence of his conduct answered that though no doubt he was trespassing, he hoped that it would be a palliation of his offence that once a week for twenty years he had taken care to read the notice on the board—"Private road. Trespassing forbidden." Would that be a rational excuse ? Or suppose you had a man in your works who was constantly breaking some of the printed regulations which are put up in the shops, what would you say if he asked you to look over his bad conduct

because he always read through the regulations every Monday morning? We see the folly of a plea of that kind when alleged to cover a violation of any of our own rules and regulations; and yet so easily do we deceive ourselves, that we are all in danger of supposing that because we read the Bible and come to public worship in order to learn God's laws we have something to set off against breaking them.

Christ's words are clear. We are none the better for knowing the will of God; we must obey it. Reading the Bible is a good thing in itself, listening to sermons is a good thing in itself; but if our conduct during the day is not governed by what we read in the Bible in the morning, and if our conduct during the week is not governed by what we heard on Sunday in the sermon, we shall not be suffered to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

We must *do* the will of God. Some men have such a keen admiration for moral goodness; they can say such fine things about it, and they can say these fine things with so much emotion, that they take it for granted that they are really good. They become eloquent about honesty, industry, truthfulness, courage, the spirit of contentment, and charity; they like to hear other men speak eloquently about these virtues. When they listen they feel greatly the better for it; when they themselves have spoken they have a comfortable sense of having discharged their duty. It is a curious form of self-delusion, and yet a very common one. But neither the natural conscience nor

the teaching of Christ accepts the most enthusiastic admiration of a moral law as a substitute for obedience to it. You admire industry—good ; but if you are to enter into the kingdom of heaven you must be industrious. You think truthfulness a noble virtue—nothing can be more proper ; but if you are to enter into the kingdom of heaven you must not tell lies. You feel that there is something very lofty in Wordsworth's ideal of life—"plain living and high thinking." You are right so far ; but if you are to enter into the kingdom of heaven you must not indulge in extravagance and luxury. You are never weary of praising St. Paul's description of Charity in the Epistle to the Corinthians ; but would it not be well to read the chapter again ? "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels"—speak about charity itself with an eloquence surpassing all that was ever heard on earth or in heaven—"and *have* not charity, I am become as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal." To *have* it—not to admire it merely—is what St. Paul declares to be necessary.

Emotion of other kinds—good in its place—is also mistaken for actual well-doing. When we begin to hold political meetings in the winter there will be hundreds of men, belonging to both political parties, who will think that they are animated by a generous patriotism and a noble zeal for the public good, because they give enthusiastic cheers to the eloquence of their favourite orators ; but ask them to do some canvassing, or to give a subscription towards the ex-

penses of a contested election, and you will find that their patriotism and their zeal have all vanished. Good feeling they have in abundance ; and they seem to think that abundance of good feeling compensates for scarcity of good works.

When Hospital Sunday comes round, there will be people in all our congregations whose hearts will expand while they listen to the praise of generosity from the pulpit, and who, as the sermon goes on, will become all aglow with benevolent emotion ; and they will think that they are very generous persons, although it never occurred to them during the month before the collection that there were some things they might deny themselves in order to be able to put half-a-crown into the plate instead of a shilling, or a five-pound note instead of half-a-sovereign. They have so much generous feeling that it quite makes up for the four-penny-piece which might have been a florin, if they had thought of the collection beforehand. You have time, by the way, to act on that hint. You may determine to wear the old hat or the old dress, or to keep the old carpet on the floor, a little longer, that you may have more to give to the hospitals.

The forms which this self-delusion assumes are endless. Because their eyes fill with tears when they are told a story about human suffering, some people believe that they have what they call a "very feeling heart." And yet they never spend an hour in any troublesome endeavour to lessen the sorrows of men. They cannot find any work of that sort which quite

suits them. They never avoid any expenses that they may have money to place in the hands of those who are able to do the work.

But still they are sure that they have a "feeling heart." So they may have, for anything I know. But their "feeling heart" will count for very little when the day of judgment comes. In a later chapter in this Gospel the Lord Jesus Christ teaches us on what principles He will judge the world. He does not tell us that He will say to the righteous, You had a very "feeling heart," and when you heard about the miseries of men, you felt great pity ; you were not absorbed in your own affairs ; you were not cold and unsympathetic ; when you used to read about the hungry and the naked and the homeless, and about all who suffered from great misfortune and from great oppression, you actually wept ; and you were so compassionate that you wept as much when the story of pain and anguish and famine and shame was told in a novel as when you saw it in a newspaper, or when it came to you in a letter from a friend. No ; He will say to the righteous—

"Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world : for I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink : I was a stranger, and ye took Me in : naked, and ye clothed Me : I was sick, and ye visited Me : I was in prison, and ye came unto Me. . . . Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me" (Matt. xxv. 34-36, 40).

We must *do* the will of God if we want to enter into

God's kingdom. It is not enough that we are very sorry that we have *not* done the will of God, are ashamed, are stung with self-reproach because we have not done it. Christ's words are clear: "He that *doeth* the will of My Father"—he only is to enter the kingdom of heaven. Doing God's will is one thing, being sorry for not doing it is a different thing altogether. And yet there are some people who seem to suppose that if they are troubled, and greatly troubled, when they do wrong, their life is fairly satisfactory. They are always repenting. Day after day they commit the same faults; and day after day they are wretched because they have committed them. The achievements of a victorious Christian life they know nothing of; they are perpetually defeated, and have come to think that sorrow on account of a defeat is almost as good as a victory. They can never say that in God's presence there is fulness of joy; for whenever they speak to God they have to speak of broken vows, of resolutions which have been paralysed by the first touch of temptation, of duties neglected, of sins—a hundred times renounced—that have been repeated again. What happiness could a child have in its father's society, if morning and night, and whenever else it had the opportunity of seeing him, it had to return to the acknowledgment of the same acts of disobedience? The strongest filial affection would at last give way under the pressure of this constantly recurring humiliation; and the father's presence would be shunned rather than sought. I believe that

one of the reasons why some men have a great reluctance to pray is to be found in the consciousness that they have very little to say to God, except that they have sinned.

It might help us, perhaps, to escape from the delusion that sorrow for wrong-doing is almost as good as actual right-doing, if we asked what we should think of other men who covered in this way offences into which we ourselves are never betrayed.

You are very sorry, night after night, because you have not been quite truthful. You have not told positive lies, but you have given men wrong impressions—perhaps through vanity, perhaps through a habit of reckless speaking, perhaps to make things pleasant, perhaps for your personal profit and advantage. You know you are doing wrong, but the offence is perpetually repeated ; and you flatter yourself that your self-reproach and your secret shame are, in some sense, a cover of the sin. But suppose that you have an assistant who takes a few shillings out of your till on Monday afternoon, and is very sorry on Monday night that he has done it ; takes a few more shillings on Wednesday morning, and is just as sorry again on Wednesday night ; takes a few more on Thursday afternoon, and is more sorry than ever on Thursday night—does the sorrow cover the offence ? Is he an honest man merely because he knows that he is a thief ? Is he an honest man merely because he curses himself for having yielded to the temptation to be a thief ? Is he an honest man merely because, for the moment, he is very distressed that he is a thief ?

Sorrow for wrong-doing is admirable if it stops the wrong-doing ; but to suppose that sorrow cancels sin is one of the most common and malignant and yet shallow forms of self-deception by which men ruin themselves in this world and condemn themselves to eternal death in the next.

But suppose we resolve to do better—is not this satisfactory ? Satisfactory ? No ; not unless we actually *do* better as the result of our good resolutions. Christ does not say that the man who resolves to do the will of God will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the man who does it ; and between good resolutions and good deeds there is apt to be a very precarious connection. Some people appear to use up all their strength in making good resolutions, and they have no strength left to carry them out. And some people seem to think that when a good resolution is made it has answered its purpose, and that the whole matter is done with. It was our old friend Mr. Micawber, I think—or was it another of Mr. Dickens's characters?—who, when he had given an I O U for a debt, said, with a sigh of relief, "That's provided for." That folly is very closely analogous to the folly of which many of us are guilty in the conduct of our moral life. When a man comes to find relief in putting his name to a three months' bill, he is not far from a disgraceful bankruptcy ; and when a man comes to find comfort and satisfaction in his good resolutions, he is getting into the hands of the devil.

Good intentions are sometimes merely a sort of anodyne by which we soothe the pain of a guilty conscience ; like other anodynes, they may be so taken as to destroy our very life.

A trustee uses trust-money, meaning to replace it. To rob the widow and the children to whom the money belongs is a crime from which he would recoil. He has money of his own coming to him in a couple of months ; debts which are certain to be paid, or dividends from a company which is as sound as the Bank of England. Meanwhile he has the chance of investing £1000 so as to bring in a safe 15 per cent., and perhaps 20. Or he has to meet a bill, and does not want to increase his over-draw at the bank. This is how he puts it to himself—perhaps if he spoke the truth “in his heart,” to use the words of the Psalmist, he would say that there might be a little difficulty about increasing the over-draw, but that would be an unpleasant way of stating the case, and might suggest that his prospect of replacing the trust-money was dubious. A mortgage has just been paid off ; the amount is waiting for another investment ; for some reason or another it would be a great convenience to use a little of the loose money. If he is a pious man he will say that the payment of the mortgage looks quite providential. The money is used. Is he a thief? Vehemently and fiercely he says, No ;—for he means to put the money back. But he has taken the money, and the money is not his. He is a thief to-day, even if he means to be honest two months

hence ; and his honesty two months hence will not make him less a thief to-day. The thing he has done cannot be undone. He has murdered his honesty by what he calls a good resolution.

Let us understand that no resolution is really a good one which postpones right doing—whether it be for a month, for a week, for a day, or for an hour. A man who resolves to be honest a month hence—do you think that he has made a good resolution ? What he has really resolved is that he will be a thief for a month. If you think that this is a good resolution, I wonder what sort of resolutions you would describe as bad ones.

It is not only trust-money which is sometimes taken dishonestly with the intention of replacing it. I have heard of treasurers of societies — religious and philanthropic societies—who have used public money for their own purposes and were not able to put it back again. They never meant to be thieves, but a bank failed, or their premises were burnt down, or there was a commercial panic in Australia, and they were suddenly ruined—ruined by misfortunes which but for their dishonest appropriation of funds which were not theirs would have commanded universal sympathy. Yes, it was a dishonest appropriation. Who gave a treasurer permission to make his society a partner in his commercial risks—a partner in the risks and not in the profits ? Who gave him the right to use the society's money to lessen his bank charges ? Even if he is able to replace it, he

has taken what was not his own ; he has used what was not his own ; he has been guilty of theft though he escapes the consequences.

Clerks who collect accounts sometimes "borrow" £10 or £20 of their employers' money to pay their own rent or to meet a pressing bill, or to lend to a friend, meaning to make it all right when they receive their quarter's salary. Shopmen "borrow" a little money from the till, meaning to put it back again before the week is out. But when we "borrow" money from any man without asking him to lend, the borrowing ought to be called by a much uglier name. In all these cases the crime is committed under the cover of a resolution to replace the money. The resolution conceals the face of the criminal act, as a mask conceals the face of a burglar or a highwayman ; but the burglar is still a burglar and the highwayman is still a highwayman though he wears a mask ; and the mask of a "good resolution" to be honest at some future time does not change the character of the criminal act committed to-day.

We must *do* the will of God if we are to enter into heaven. However perfect our excuses may seem for not doing it, I cannot see that these excuses are admissible. One man pleads his natural temperament as a justification of the violence or irritability of his temper. Another pleads the sharp necessities of business as an excuse for resorting to accommodation bills and other illegitimate methods of raising money. Another pleads the bad treatment he has received from

a relative or a friend in defence of rough and hard and uncharitable words about him. God who made us, knows our frame and He remembers that we are dust ; Christ can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, having been tempted in all points as we are. We may rely on the Divine tenderness and mercy. God will not deal hardly with us ; He treats us more generously than we treat each other ; sometimes He treats us more mercifully than we treat ourselves. But to allege temptation as an apology for sin is clearly to defy the authority of the Divine law and to dissolve all moral obligations. It is to argue that we are not bound to do right when we have any strong inducement to do wrong.

You think that because a man has injured you, there is no great blame in saying hard and ungenerous things about him ; but it is only when a man has injured you—or when you think he has injured you—that there is any danger of your saying hard and ungenerous things about him. It is only then that you have the opportunity of being faithful to the law of charity which requires you to do good to them that hate you, and to return good for evil.

You think that because you are in difficulties, difficulties which may have come upon you through the misconduct of others, or through mere misfortune, you are not to be severely condemned if you raise money in dishonest ways ; but what man would dream of raising money in dishonest ways who was not in difficulties ? It is only when the dif-

faculties come that the test of honesty assumes this form.

You think that because you have an unamiable temper, or because your blood is hot and you easily kindle into passion, you ought to be excused for using violent language; but if you were naturally kindly, and if your blood were cool, there would be no need of watchfulness and of self-discipline in order to avoid this sin. It is to you, to you especially, rather than to persons who are of a different temperament, that the commandments are given requiring gentleness, kindness, and courtesy. You are the very people whose loyalty to God is to be shown in obedience to these commands.

We know how severely the fidelity and constancy of Christian men were tested in the tragic ages of the Church. They did not plead that if they were true to conscience and to God they would be fined, would be exiled, would be imprisoned, stretched on the rack, flung to wild beasts, beheaded, burnt at the stake. When martyrdom was the penalty of right-doing, martyrdom did not seem to Christian men a reason for doing wrong; it was a noble test of their fidelity to Christ. We need more of the temper of those heroic times. It is just as much worth a Christian man's while to suffer heavily for the sake of right practice as to suffer heavily for the sake of true doctrine. The men who were burnt because they refused to attend mass served God gloriously. Men who might get £2000 a year but live on £200 rather than

turn a hair's breadth from the line of rectitude, serve God not less gloriously. If the loss is heavier still—if righteousness involves utter ruin, ruin for yourselves, for your wives, for your children—you have not to make larger sacrifices than were made, not only by martyrs whose names shine out like constellations in the darkness of past centuries, but by innumerable men who perished in loathsome prisons, were sent in gangs to the scaffold, and have left no memory of their courage and integrity behind them. They, too, not only suffered themselves—their wives were made widows, their children were made homeless orphans. If penalties as great were to come upon you for steadfast loyalty to righteousness, you would see in the rugged path you would have to tread the foot-prints of the saints. I doubt whether such sufferings ever come upon men in this country and in these times for fidelity to duty ; but it is plain that if we are to enter the kingdom of heaven we must do the will of God—all the will of God—and do it at all costs.

I say again, as I said at the commencement of this discourse, that from these words there can be no appeal. The Lord Jesus Christ is the moral Ruler of the human race ; before His judgment-seat we must stand at last to give account of the deeds done in the body. His teaching on the destiny of mankind is not the mere speculation of a wise and good man striving to discover, but, at the best, discovering imperfectly, the great laws of the kingdom of God. He speaks with authority. The laws which He declares are His own

laws ; the penalties He threatens, the rewards He promises, will come from His own hand. It is He who has revealed, it is He who will confer, eternal blessedness and glory ; and from His lips will come the doom of those who will miss this transcendent hope, and die the second death.

The great discourse, which is closed with these dark and terrible warnings against the violation of the laws of God, was delivered, as we discover from the other Gospels, after Christ's open controversy with the Pharisees had begun ; and the Pharisees were the men who claimed an exceptional righteousness on the ground of their scrupulous observance of the Divine commandments. It was one of their principal charges against Jesus of Nazareth that He was relaxing the authority of the law : He healed men on the Sabbath ; He told a man whom He had healed to carry home his bed on the Sabbath ; His disciples plucked ears of corn and ate them on the Sabbath. He was a Sabbath-breaker Himself—so they said—and He sanctioned Sabbath-breaking in other men. The religious authorities of the country were stirring up the popular passion against Christ on this ground—and some good men were no doubt greatly perplexed by what seemed to them His violation of God's law. In the Sermon on the Mount He makes His defence ; He replies that He had not come to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfil them. “ Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of

heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." The scribes and the Pharisees were charging Him with encouraging men to break God's law. He answers: "I say unto you that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

He then proceeds to illustrate the nobler righteousness which He required from His disciples. The old law forbade men to commit murder; He, with the same stringency, forbids unjustifiable anger¹ and reckless and contemptuous speech. The old law forbade adultery; He as sternly forbids lustful thoughts. The old law forbade false oaths; He requires men to be so truthful when they are not on oath that oaths shall become unnecessary. This contrast between the old law and the new He develops at considerable length, and then He turns suddenly upon the Pharisees, whose righteousness was largely intended to win for them the honour of men; who gave alms in public to secure a reputation for generosity, prayed in the streets that men might talk of their devoutness, fasted ostentatiously that men might wonder at their asceticism; and He says that His disciples were to be righteous when none could see their righteousness but God;

¹ Whether the Greek word represented by the phrase "without a cause" is kept in the text or not, the general meaning of the passage is not affected; the *form* of the menace is more striking if the word is omitted.

their alms, their prayers, their self-discipline were to be acts of obedience to the Divine law ; they were to be content if they missed human praise ; they were to care only for the reward of their Father in heaven.

He then strikes a still severer blow. The Pharisees professed to be eminently religious, and declared that the honour of God was the supreme business of their life ; but the real business of many of them was to get rich ; and in accumulating wealth they were eager, hard, and unscrupulous. Christ says that His disciples are not to make it the object of life to lay up for themselves treasures on earth ; that no man can serve God and Mammon ; that they are not to be anxious about what they were to eat, what they were to drink, or what they were to put on—these were the things about which heathen men were anxious ; and the difference between His disciples and the world is to consist in this—that His disciples are to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and to trust in God for everything besides. They were to make it their great object to do the will of God on common days as well as on sacred days, in common work as well as in religious work. If riches came as the result of their industry, honesty, truthfulness, loyalty to God, it would be well ; if not, it would still be well ; they succeeded in life if they succeeded in doing God's will.

Then followed some other precepts ; among them, precepts teaching His disciples to ask from God all they wanted : God was their Father, and if earthly

parents gave good things to their children, much more would God give good things to them that asked Him. That He had called them to a difficult life He admits. The gate is wide, the way is broad, that leads to destruction, and many there are that go in thereat; the gate is narrow, the way is strait, that leads to eternal life, and there are few that find it. But they must accept the difficulty if they mean to secure eternal blessedness. False prophets may give them a different teaching; the teaching is to be tested by the fruits; and every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.

The expression of deep reverence for Himself, the possession of spiritual gifts, the power to work miracles in His name—even these would not be sufficient to secure an entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Men must keep the commandments which He had just given. Practical righteousness, obedience to the will of God in this world, is the condition of glory, honour, and immortality in the next. “Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father who is in heaven.”

This is the Christian religion according to Christ. He taught many other things; but He taught nothing that enfeebles and relaxes the moral energy of this great discourse. This is a large part of that faith once delivered to the saints, for which we are charged to “contend earnestly.” This is Christian

orthodoxy. This is the Evangelical Faith. That the Church has seriously failed down to our own time in its fidelity to these ethical laws is as true as that the Church had seriously failed for several centuries before the Reformation in its fidelity to the great doctrines by which Luther breathed new life and vigour into half of western Europe. Now and then there have been glorious times of revival—times of moral as well as of ecclesiastical and doctrinal reform—times in which large portions of the Church have come to understand more clearly the ethical teaching of Christ as well as His teaching on Christian doctrine and ecclesiastical life. But the ethical, like the spiritual growth of the Church, has been fitful and unequal.

If we had not been so slow of heart to learn all that He has taught us, how fair, how noble the life of Christendom would have become. The reign of Christ has begun, but, largely through our fault, the splendid hopes of ancient prophecy are as yet imperfectly fulfilled. Through us Christ wants to “judge the poor of the people,” and to “save the children of the needy,” and to “break in pieces the oppressor.” Through us He is to make “the righteous flourish;” and through us He is to give to the world “abundance of peace as long as the moon endureth.” We have failed, miserably failed, in our duty to Him and to mankind. We have imperilled our own entrance into heaven. We have delayed the triumph of the righteousness and love of God

over the sin and sorrows of our race. Generation after generation is swept away, and still the golden age does not come. But "He shall live," "His name shall endure for ever ; His name shall continue as long as the sun ;" His laws will be obeyed, and His triumph will come at last ; and then "men shall be blessed in Him, and all nations shall call Him blessed."

VI.

MORALITY AND THE EVANGELICAL FAITH.

IN the short series of discourses which I shall bring to a close to-night, I have not attempted a complete and systematic treatment of the science of morals. I have illustrated a few great principles which admitted of separate and independent discussion, and which, for practical reasons, it seemed desirable to explain and enforce. In the course of the winter I shall deliver, as I have delivered before, occasional discourses on particular virtues—Industry, Truth, Honesty, Temperance, the Spirit of Contentment, Charity, Courtesy, Courage, Public Spirit; but I do not intend to deliver these discourses as parts of a series on successive Sunday evenings.

To-night I shall recall to your memory the principles which I have endeavoured to maintain; I shall trace them to their roots in the central facts and truths of the Christian revelation; and I shall try to show that these principles receive strong support and vivid illustration from the characteristic doctrines of the Evangelical faith.

It would be impossible to find any words in the

New Testament which Evangelical Christians would more heartily accept as containing the very substance of the Christian Gospel than the words in the third chapter of St. John's Gospel and the nineteenth verse,

"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but might have everlasting life."

These words, therefore, I shall take as the text of this evening's sermon. Here I find my religion and my theology, my ethics and my politics—politics, in fact, being one of the chief branches of ethics. The Divine love for mankind ; the mission of the Son of God for the salvation of mankind ; faith in the Son of God the condition of salvation ; eternal life the gift of the Divine love to all that believe in Christ ;—these are the truths to which the Christian preacher must incessantly recur ; and these truths lie at the very foundation of the religious belief and the practical life of the Christian Church.

Evangelical Christians have claimed one of these truths as pre-eminently their own. They have emphasized it in their theology ; they have reiterated it in their preaching. The leaders of the Evangelical Revival believed that this truth had been suppressed or obscured where it had not been explicitly denied, and that they were called of God to restore it to its original place in the creed of the Church. Faith in Christ the condition of salvation—this in the judgment of Evangelical Christians is the very heart

of the Gospel. George Whitefield was a Calvinist ; John Wesley was an Arminian, and denounced Calvinism with vehement hatred and in terms of unmeasured condemnation ; but when a man asked, "What must I do to be saved ?" George Whitefield and John Wesley gave him the same answer : "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." And whenever the glorious fires of Evangelicalism break out afresh, whenever there is a return of the ardour and enthusiasm of the Evangelical Revival, this great truth is again preached with passionate earnestness, and the preaching is followed, in our days as in the days of our fathers, with wonderful results.

I suppose that it is hardly possible to state this truth too strongly. Luther maintained that the doctrine of Justification by faith was the test of a standing or a falling Church. For our part we go farther, and ascribe to Faith a still greater place in the religious life of mankind. It is as necessary to preach that men are *sanctified* "by Faith, not by works," as to preach that they are *justified* "by Faith not by works." Faith is the root of the noblest morality, as well as the condition of the pardon of sin. It gives vigour to righteousness in this world as well as secures "glory, honour, and immortality" in the world to come. The eleventh chapter in the Epistle to the Hebrews which illustrates the triumphs of Faith is an unfinished fragment ; to complete it you must add the story of the saintliness and heroism, the righteousness and the charity of sixty generations : even then

it remains a fragment still ; for the eternal perfection and power and blessedness of the multitude that no man can number, redeemed from every kindred and tongue and people and nation, will be the glorious fruits of a life which by faith is rooted in the life and love of God. I stand by Luther, I stand by all Evangelical Christians, in their conflict for the supreme importance of faith. They cannot say more than is said in the text ; it is the Divine purpose and law that "whosoever believeth in [Christ] should not perish, but have everlasting life."

But to believe in Christ—what is it ? It is not the mere acceptance, however cordial, of the Christian creed, although the theoretical vindication of belief in Christ will include the development of a very rich and comprehensive theological system. But to believe in Christ is to have confidence in Christ Himself—confidence unreserved, unqualified, unmeasured. Whatever dignity Christ claims, Faith reverently acknowledges the dignity. Whatever relation He assumes to God and to man, Faith concedes the relation without doubt and without reluctance. Whatever authority He asserts, Faith submits to the authority with perfect loyalty. When He teaches, Faith receives all His teaching as revelations of the absolute Truth. When He commands, Faith accepts His precepts as the supreme law of life, believes in the possibility of obeying them, and in the necessity of obeying them at all costs. When He makes promises, however immense the promises may be, Faith relies on Him to fulfil them all.

To admit some of the claims of Christ and to reject the rest; to listen to Him when He declares that He came to seek and to save the lost, and that His blood was shed for the remission of sins; to refuse to listen, or to listen incredulously, when He speaks as the moral Ruler of the human race, claiming obedience and rendering obedience possible—this is inconsistent with faith in Him. We may accept one part of a creed and refuse another; but if we believe in Christ Himself, we admit every claim that He makes, we receive all that He teaches, we trust Him to fulfil all that He promises, we acknowledge the obligation of all His laws. This is what I mean by faith, when I assert that faith in Christ has a right to so great a place in human life.

Now let us consider the relations of these truths to the principles which I have been stating in this series of discourses. I began by maintaining that, apart from what we commonly describe as God's supernatural revelation of Himself to mankind, man has a knowledge of morality and recognises the obligations of duty. These are facts about which there can be no dispute. Heathen men without any knowledge of the Bible have seen the difference between right and wrong, and have recognised the obligation of many noble virtues. The faculty by which man perceives for himself the dignity and authority of duty is one of the loftiest of his prerogatives. Whether the faculty is simple or complex is of no importance to our immediate purpose. It existed in the world before

Christ came ; it exists still. It carries its own authority with it, apart from any Divine commandment given by prophet or apostle, or revealed amidst thunders and lightnings, or contained in the teaching of the Son of God.

Like every other human faculty, it requires education and discipline, but this does not make it less wonderful. One of our plainest duties is to develop it, and to develop it by all the means within our reach. To suppress the natural conscience by perpetually invoking the authority of supernatural laws is to make revelation an instrument for degrading our nature by paralysing and destroying one of the greatest of our powers.

In reply to those Christian people who maintain that apart from the Bible there are no sources of moral knowledge, it is enough to quote the express words of the Bible itself. St. Paul teaches us that when the heathen, who "have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law are a law to themselves." He says that they "show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another." But we can do more than quote an isolated text in reply to this amazing heresy. It is part of my belief in Christ to believe in the authority of the natural conscience of man.

Through whatever processes of development our physical nature may have risen to its present height of perfection, Christ created us. St. John ascribes

to Him the creation of all things—"all things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made." The curious and wonderful structure of our physical organisation—hand and foot, heart and brain, our powers of sight, of hearing, and of speech—all came from Christ. Every intellectual faculty—perception, memory, judgment, fancy, imagination, wit—is His gift. He kindled the fires of the sun, and He kindled the nobler fires of genius. Our moral nature is closely akin to Him; "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men;" He breathed into us the breath of life; we were made in His image. He may have produced our physical nature by working on the lines of fixed and unchanging law; but our moral nature, with its regal prerogative of freedom, with the faculty enabling us to distinguish for ourselves between virtue and vice, between what is morally good and what is morally evil, came direct from Himself. "The life" which was eternally in Him is "the light of men;" and though St. John was surrounded when he wrote this Gospel with what seems to many of us the unbroken darkness of heathenism, he adds, "He is the light that lighteth every man."

My faith concedes every claim that Christ makes; the claim which St. John makes for Him is invested with His own authority; it is corroborated by other passages in the teaching of the apostles; it is directly or indirectly sustained by the teaching of Christ Himself. I concede it without hesitation; if I hesitated

my faith in Christ would be imperfect, and I might separate myself from Him in whom alone I have eternal life. The law written in the heart was written by the same hand that wrote the commandments on the tables of stone ; the writing may often be hard to read ; sometimes it may be almost effaced ; but wherever I can find it, my reverence for Christ compels me to reverence it. If I can, I will make it plain again. To cast it aside with contempt, to depreciate its authority, because Christ has written other commandments elsewhere, is to do dishonour to Christ Himself.

He is "the light that lighteth every man." I will read Plato and Epictetus, Seneca and Marcus Antoninus to discover how much light He gave to heathen moralists. I do Christ no honour if I assume that light which came from Him was not worth having. As I see ray after ray of His glory piercing the darkness, my love for Him is deepened, and I discover new reasons for acknowledging His infinite mercy to mankind.

He is "the light that lighteth every man." Every glowing vision of moral goodness which thrills the heart of man, be he heathen or Christian, believer or unbeliever, I claim as the gift of Christ. To every man who has a keen, clear sense of the contrast between honesty and dishonesty, justice and injustice, selfishness and generosity, I will say that, whether he knows it or not, his moral light has come to him from the eternal Word of God, who, in the person of Christ was made flesh and dwelt among us.

Reverence for Christ Himself, faith in Christ Himself, the faith which is the condition of eternal life, forbid me to speak scornfully of the revelation which He makes day by day to every human soul. To deny the reality of that revelation is to refuse to acknowledge one of the great claims of Christ and to be guilty of unbelief. I will teach men to regard with wonder and thankfulness the light which shines direct from Him into every human soul; I will entreat them to walk in that light, believing that those who welcome the faint dawn of the morning struggling with the clouds and darkness, will rejoice when the Sun of Righteousness appears above the horizon and the dawn brightens into the perfect day.

In this third chapter of John's Gospel, a few verses later than the text, there is a remarkable statement of the principle which is vindicated in the Divine judgment of those who refuse to believe in the Son of God. The principle is stated in a form which seems to illustrate the fundamental law of the Divine government of the race. "This is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil." Those who reject Christ reject Him because they do not love the light; this is the explanation of unbelief when unbelief has a moral rather than an intellectual root. And since the light which reaches those who have never heard of Christ comes also from Him, this general principle seems to determine the relation of heathen men to God. The light which comes to us

in Christ is the same light—shining more gloriously—that comes to us in conscience. To receive and rejoice in the light is to receive and rejoice in Christ Himself—“Whosoever believeth in Him” is to “have everlasting life.” Men are condemned if they shrink from the light, whether the light is dim or clear; heathen men, and those to whom Christ is known, stand or fall by one law: Do they love the light they have, or do they love the darkness? Do they come to the light, or do they retreat from it? In all cases the light is from Christ—to love it is to love Him, to shrink from it is to shrink from Him.

My faith in Christ requires me to honour and to cultivate the natural conscience; for I believe in Him as “the light that lighteth every man.”

The second position which I endeavoured to maintain in this course of sermons was that the morals of those who profess to serve Christ should be nobler than the morals of those who do not profess to serve Him. That this position rests upon the great facts of the Christian revelation needs no proof. Christ came to establish the kingdom of heaven among men; He gave us not only a more spiritual faith, but a loftier conception of righteousness. He illustrated that conception in His own life and conduct. He revealed and He created motives of transcendent power to sustain us in right doing; and by conferring on us the gift of that diviner life which begins with the New Birth, He augments immeasurably the possibilities of human

righteousness. He claims authority over our life in this world as well as promises eternal blessedness in the next ; in this world He makes us partakers of the Divine nature that in the world to come we may have our home in the Divine glory. I believe in Christ—I acknowledge Him when He claims to be the Founder of the kingdom of heaven upon earth, and therefore I must believe that the morals of Christian men should be loftier, both in idea and in fact, than the morals of those to whom Christ is unknown.

The third position which I tried to establish was the necessity of cultivating the conscience, and by this is meant the necessity of that moral education of various kinds, by which the conscience is trained to recognise for itself the distinction between right and wrong in all the details of conduct.

Of this discipline many Christian people are impatient. They think it hard that although they desire to do right they are in continual doubt about how they ought to act. Duty is vague and indeterminate. They want a definite law and they cannot find it. May I go to the theatre or may I not? Ought I to decline an invitation to a ball or may I accept it? Is it wrong to ride in a tram-car on Sunday? What proportion of my income is it my duty to reserve for charitable uses? What profit may I honestly make on the goods I sell? May I ticket them 40, 50, or 100 per cent. above cost price, if I can get anybody to buy them? Is it my duty to abstain from intoxi-

cating drinks? If I know that another man has been guilty of a very serious fault, am I at liberty to conceal it from his employers, from his friends, from the members of the Church to which he belongs? All these are examples of the ethical questions which have worried people whom I know, and which have been brought to me for solution. Very often those who have asked the questions have shown, and they have sometimes said plainly, that they could not understand why the New Testament did not contain clear rules for the guidance of conduct, rules which it would be impossible to misunderstand. It is certain that the rules are not there. Questions affecting conduct arose in the early Church which caused great excitement and great perplexity. Even when an apostle pronounced his own judgment he did not impose it on others as an authoritative law. One man was afraid to eat meat bought in the market place, lest he should eat what had been offered to idols; another man had no such scruples. One man esteemed one day above another—thought that there were holy days, such as the Jewish Sabbath, which ought to be specially consecrated to God; another man thought all days were alike. St. Paul said, "Let each one be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not and he giveth God thanks."

The questions which St. Paul dealt with in this way were about things which are in themselves indifferent ; and very many of the practical questions by which good men are still tormented are of the same kind. But St. Paul's method of dealing with them illustrates the Christian method of governing conduct. The individual conscience is to be enlightened so that every man may see his duty for himself.

There are definite laws, no doubt, which it is a great crime to disobey ; but the practical difficulty is to discover how these laws apply to particular cases. That the law is right we see for ourselves, unless our consciences are very blind ; we want to know whether a particular act or a particular line of conduct is a violation of the law ; and many a man resents the difficulty which often occurs in solving this question. He thinks it a mockery if he is told that in answer to prayer, by a devout study of the teaching and example of Christ, by the honest use of all natural means for educating the conscience, he will come to have a clearer vision of duty. He wants to know how to act to-day ; and to tell him that in the course of a few years his moral nature will be so developed that he will be able to distinguish far more accurately than he can distinguish now between the right and the wrong seems nothing to the purpose. He feels that it is sometimes very hard to walk in the right path when he knows it, and that there is something unreasonable in the necessity of taking a great deal of trouble in order to discover it.

But this is Christ's method. We can see some of the reasons of it. Definite laws to be blindly obeyed are given to slaves. The service to which He has called us is perfect freedom. He treats us as friends, not as slaves. He confers on us the dignity of the sons of God. It is a nobler thing to do the right, recognising its righteousness, than to do it unintelligently as an act of bare submission to authority. Had we never broken the Divine law, the development of conscience would have been concurrent with the successive exigencies of human life; and from moment to moment we should have been able to see plainly to what duty the circumstances of the moment called us. Our difficulties are the result of an abnormal moral condition; but if we are ever to rise to the ideal moral greatness to which the love of God destines us, it must be by a discipline in which authority and freedom are blended. Hence arise many of the practical difficulties of life. They might be averted if we had a definite rule—a definite rule given directly by God Himself, or given by a Church or a priest supposed to be invested with God's authority. But if in every moral perplexity we had the external guidance of a precise law, the free growth of our own moral nature would be arrested.

Such reasons as these may alleviate the impatience of which we are sometimes conscious when the line of duty is hard to determine, and they may also reconcile us to the labour which is necessary to educate the conscience.

But there is a more simple and direct way of dealing with the difficulty. We believe in the Son of God, and for us the Lord Jesus Christ is infinitely more than the most august form in the past history of our race. He is the living Prince and Saviour of men. It was expedient for us that He should "go away," for He has "come again," and is nearer to us now than He was to the dearest of His friends in the years of His earthly sorrow and conflict. We have not merely the great discourse which He delivered when the multitudes sat round Him on the heights which rise above the western shore of the Lake of Galilee, nor the pathetic words which He spoke to His disciples in the upper chamber in Jerusalem on the night in which He was betrayed; He is still the Teacher as well as the Lord of the Church. Our faith rests in Him—not in theologians, not in councils of the Church. If we ceased to have faith in Him we should be in danger of losing everlasting life.

He did not exhaust "the manifold wisdom of God" in what He revealed to His disciples between His baptism and His ascension into heaven. He promised His earthly friends that the Spirit would so illuminate their minds as to give them a deeper knowledge of Himself than they had acquired during the time He was with them. He had begun to teach them, but the Spirit would lead them into "all the truth." This promise is the inalienable inheritance of the Church.

From age to age the Church, as a whole, is receiving

the illumination of the Spirit of Christ ; from year to year individual men who are faithful to Christ are receiving the same illumination. The recorded words and deeds and sufferings of Christ are the paths by which the Spirit leads us into provinces of spiritual truth of which no human language can give an adequate account ; and these words and deeds and sufferings are also the paths by which the Spirit leads us into higher and yet higher knowledge of moral duty. We are "taught of God ;" we are "disciples" from the beginning of our Christian life to the end of it ; and we all sit at the feet of the same Teacher. He teaches us in many ways—not only by the words of prophets and apostles, and of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself—but by the holiness of saints, by their conflicts and their triumphs ; by the bright and by the sorrowful incidents of our personal history ; by the wisdom of the great masters of Christian theology ; by the simplicity of the faith and the uprightness of the lives of the humblest of our Christian brethren. His own inspiration rests upon us, and the light which fell upon the thought of those who taught the Church in the first age is shining still. He reveals duty as well as truth, the will of God concerning our personal life as well as the great love of God for all mankind, the Divine law for the ordering of conduct in this world as well as the Divine promises of eternal glory in the world to come. In other words, the education of the conscience is part of the work of the Spirit of God. If, under the discipline and illumination of the Spirit, there is a per-

petual development in our knowledge of "the love of Christ which passeth knowledge," there is a similar development in our knowledge of the law of righteousness. To deny either of these developments is to refuse to believe in some of the most wonderful relations between the living Christ and those whom He has brought home to God. I insist on the perpetual development of conscience because I believe in Christ who promised that His Spirit should lead us into all the truth.

The fourth position I have maintained is that without practical righteousness—of which good morals, in the plainest, homeliest sense of the words, form a chief part—it is impossible to enter at last into the kingdom of heaven. Perhaps this may seem inconsistent with the most conspicuous doctrines of the Evangelical creed. The charge has been so often repeated that Evangelical theology relaxes moral obligations that many men assume that the calumny must be true. It was not heard for the first time in our own days. It was not heard for the first time when the doctrine of justification by faith was preached by Luther three centuries and a half ago. It was brought against St. Paul himself. There were some who represented the great apostle as teaching that since we are justified not by our own righteousness, but by the infinite mercy of God through faith in Christ, personal righteousness is unnecessary to salvation; and that since the magnitude of our sins illustrates the magni-

tude of the grace by which they are forgiven, it is lawful to sin that grace may abound. St. Paul flings the slander from him with hot indignation, and says that if men teach any such doctrine as this, their damnation is just.

It is true, no doubt, that there are some forms in which the doctrine of justification by faith is taught which logically abrogate the necessity of good moral conduct. But there is something in human nature which transcends logic; and even those who have held a theory of justification which logically involved the most immoral results have seen as clearly as other men that Christ not only left the authority of the moral law unimpaired, but added to it new and tremendous sanctions. If any of you have so understood the evangelical doctrine of justification as to imagine that it leaves you at liberty to lie, to cheat, and to be idle, without imperilling your eternal salvation, be sure of it you have never understood the doctrine at all.

It is extremely significant that St. Paul—who exhibits the doctrine of justification by faith in a more audacious form, if I may venture to describe it so, than any other of the apostles, also insists with more terrible severity on the account which we must all give at the Divine judgment-seat of the deeds done in the body.

When he speaks in his epistles of judgment to come, he is thinking of those to whom the epistles are written—men and women who acknowledged the authority of Christ, and were relying upon Christ for

eternal blessedness. He refers but rarely to the final judgment of those who are flagrantly impenitent and who do not profess to serve Christ. It is while he is discussing the questions which troubled the Church about eating meat which had been offered to idols and keeping holy days that he turns abruptly on the men who were guilty of judging each other uncharitably on account of differences of opinion and practice in such matters as these, and asks, "But thou, why dost thou judge thy brother? And thou, also, why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of God." He does not exempt himself from the solemnity of that final review of human conduct. After describing his sufferings and the earnest desire which sometimes came to him to be absent from the body and present with the Lord, he adds, "Wherefore also we labour, that whether present or absent we may be accepted of Him ; for we must all appear—or be made manifest—before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." St. Paul, at least, never imagined that there was any want of harmony between justification by faith and judgment by works, between the freedom of God's mercy in forgiving the sins of those who believe in Christ and the terror of that account which every man must give at last of his own moral conduct.

Let us look at the Pauline theology of justification. God freely forgives the sins of every man that believes

in Christ: this is the most elementary truth of the Gospel. Paul adds something to this, and teaches that we are "*justified by faith.*" Justification is more than pardon. A man who keeps the law is in a right relation to the law, and his well-doing is his justification. But we have all broken the Divine commandments, and our only hope is in the Divine mercy. That mercy is revealed to us through Christ; Christ came into the world to save the world. What, then, is the right relation between us and God? Clearly a relation of perfect faith on our part in Christ—God manifest in the flesh—who has come to save us. Where that faith exists those who have done wrong assume their right moral position; they fulfil the fundamental condition of their redemption, and St. Paul declares that God recognises them as in a right relation to Himself; in other words, He justifies them. There is very much more than this involved in the Pauline doctrine of justification, but this seems to be the root of it.¹

But what is this faith in Christ which secures the pardon of sin, and also secures justification, which is something more than pardon? It is a faith, as I said at the beginning of this discussion, which concedes every claim that Christ makes, and trusts Him for the fulfilment of every promise. Christ died for the sins of the race, and He offers men the forgiveness of sin;

¹ By Faith a man's life is rooted in the life of Christ, and is voluntarily submitted to the control of Christ's authority; hence Faith is the guarantee that ultimately a perfect personal righteousness will be achieved.

Faith trusts Him for forgiveness. But this is not all. He claims the right to rule the race; Faith acknowledges the right, and makes His will the law of conduct. He declares that the supreme end of life should be to keep His commandments; that for His sake pleasure and riches and earthly fame and honour, the dear love of kindred, life itself, must, if necessary, be given up. Faith concedes these infinite claims on obedience and loyalty, seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and, whether in the obscure and monotonous paths of common duty or in tragic hours of martyrdom, maintains at all hazards an incorruptible fidelity to Christ. Christ offers to men a Divine life by which human nature is rendered capable of recovering perfectly the Divine image, Faith accepts the transcendent gift, and dares to attempt the imitation of God. Christ promises that hour by hour He will give to those who love Him and try to keep His words, defence against temptation, and strong support in right doing. Faith believes that He can give both, and for both implicitly relies on Him. Christ declares that He is the Judge of all the earth, and will reward men at last according to their works; Faith listens with awe to this great discovery, and under the constraint and pressure of that final account, as well as under the kindlier influence of Christ's infinite love, endeavours so to live that Christ may be able at last to say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Let it be admitted that the evangelical Gospel is sometimes preached in so impoverished a form that it contains nothing beyond the elementary truth that Christ forgives the sins of all that believe on Him ; even this limited belief in Christ implies the recognition of His moral authority. He could have no right to forgive if He had no right to command. He must be our Prince if He is to be our Saviour. But in any intelligent and complete statement of the Christian Gospel His moral supremacy is explicitly asserted, and the faith which relies upon Him for the pardon of sin receives from His lips the law of righteousness and the strength to keep the law.

Faith is not always victorious. Sometimes the Christian soul will lose its impression of Christ's majesty and of Christ's infinite love, will forget the authority of His throne and the awfulness of His judgment-seat. For the sins which result from the lapses and infirmities of faith forgiveness will be granted ; but wherever faith is really present, the habit of the soul will be to acknowledge the supreme authority of the will of God, and in response to faith Christ will give the moral and spiritual energy necessary to do it.

Faith may be sometimes weakened by the want of vigilance, or of prayer, or of devout communion with God, or of what our fathers used to call "spiritual recollection ;" it may be overborne for a moment by the sudden violence of passion. The force of the soul's endeavour to do the Divine will may be some-

times broken by intellectual and physical habits which are the result of negligence, ignorance, or defective training. Where there is adequate strength for righteousness there may be an imperfect knowledge of duty ; and so a man who has faith in Christ, and whose great endeavour is therefore to do the will of God, may occasionally commit moral offences which his own conscience condemns, or he may habitually neglect unrecognised moral duties. These conscious or unconscious violations of God's law vary in guilt, and must have varying effects on a man's present moral and spiritual position and on his ultimate destiny. He will receive at last the things done in the body. If his faith in Christ is genuine and true, and the Divine will is the real law of his life, then, notwithstanding the failures which mar the perfection of his obedience, he is a loyal citizen of the kingdom of heaven, and his eternal home must be with God. But his failures—and that by no arbitrary Divine appointment, but by the certain operation of the law of righteousness working through the will of God—will lessen his capacity both for the service and the blessedness of the immortal life beyond the grave. There are some Christian people who, according to Paul, will be saved at last as a man is saved whose house, and all the rare and costly and pleasant things accumulated by the labour and skill of a lifetime, are burnt up, he himself being dragged out through the flames—"saved as through the fire." There are some who by righteous living are laying up

for themselves treasure in heaven, and who when they die will find it waiting for them there. But to enter the kingdom of heaven at all, a man must do the will of God. It cannot be otherwise; the fundamental article of our faith is this, that Christ came "to save His people from their sins:" those whom He has not saved from their sins He has not saved at all.

God loves the world—with a love full of tenderness and pity and mercy; and yet with a love that is lofty, noble, and severe. God's love for us makes Him impatient of our sin. He forgives it, but on condition that we receive from Him the will and the strength to forsake it. He listens to the prayer of the basest of men for pardon, but he requires all men to become saints. The eternal blessedness which He makes our inheritance through Christ, is the final transfiguration of a nature which has become like God in righteousness and true holiness; and it is by patient continuance in well-doing that we must seek for glory, honour, and immortality.

VII.

THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.¹

That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations.—LUKE xxiv. 47.

IT is the faith of Christendom, it is the faith of those who have erected this building for Christian teaching and worship, that the Christ who suffered and rose from the dead the third day, and who commanded the Apostles to preach in His name repentance and remission of sins to all nations, was the Creator of the heavens and the earth, the Moral Ruler and Judge, as well as the Redeemer, of mankind. His Incarnation, His earthly Life, His Death and Resurrection, created, as we believe, the existing relations between the human race and God.

Christianity is, therefore, an historical religion; and this means, not merely that Christianity has a history—in that sense every definite form of religious belief and practice that has been able to secure and to maintain any measure of authority over the spiritual life of man might be described as an historical reli-

¹ Preached at the opening of the new Congregational Church at East End, Finchley, March 14, 1878.

gion—but that in Christ God was really present among men, so that having seen Him we have seen the Father; and we also believe that the earthly history of Christ has permanently changed the moral and spiritual order of the world. By His assumption of our nature, by His victory over temptation, by His fulfilment of the moral and spiritual ideal of human perfection, by His experience of human sorrow and joy, by the authority which He asserted over the forces of the physical universe, by His mysterious and awful sufferings on the cross as a sacrifice for the sin of the world, by His triumph over the grave, and by His ascent into a life of glory, He accomplished the redemption of mankind, brought the whole race into new relations to God, and also into new relations to the visible and invisible universe. This is what I meant when I said that His Incarnation, His earthly life, His Death and Resurrection, created the existing relations between the human race and God.¹

This building, therefore, has not been erected that those who are to meet in it from week to week may attempt adventurous lines of speculation in order to discover whether there is a God for man to obey and

¹ The relations between man and God have their ultimate ground in the eternal relations between the Eternal Word and the Father. Our moral and spiritual position is not an after-thought of God's. But the normal realisation of our ideal position was disturbed by human sin; and it is only because Christ has been "made sin" for us, and, in His own Person, has raised human nature to a new life in God, that we retain or recover our relations to God through Him.

trust and love and worship ; and if there is, what God's idea may be concerning the life of man and man's relations to Himself. The building—since it is a Christian church—commemorates a great history ; it is the monument of a Divine revelation ; it recalls to every one that passes it the song which was sung by the angels of Bethlehem, the sermon which was delivered on the Mount, the miracles of mercy by which Christ relieved the sorrows of men, His agony in Gethsemane, His death on the cross, the stone that was rolled away from the sepulchre, the appearance of the risen Christ to His disciples, and His ascension into heaven.

For us, therefore, the authority of Christ is supreme. With Him we can hold no controversy. He is above criticism. On all questions concerning the character and will and purposes of God, Christ's teaching is decisive, for "no man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." And Christ Himself is greater than His words ; He is the Truth as well as the Way and the Life ; He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person. For any doctrine to have a right to be described as Christian, there is one decisive test—Can it be verified by the recorded teaching of Christ ? Is it a true and natural explanation of His history ? Does it receive any sanction from the writings of those who had the best means of knowing the thought of Christ, and who received a special commission from Him to preach the Gospel to all

mankind? A similar test must be applied to all ecclesiastical institutions. The Church is not a society created by men, it was founded by Christ; His will must therefore be supreme in all questions relating to its constitution and government. Concerning every ecclesiastical arrangement, we are bound to ask whether it derives any direct or indirect sanction from His authority, whether it is in harmony with the genius of His religion as taught by Himself, whether it is intended to promote any of the objects for which He founded the Church, whether it is likely to secure these objects. Ethical principles must be tested in the same way. Do they appear, implicitly or explicitly, in those laws which Christ gave for the government of His kingdom? Are they illustrated in His own character? Whether any particular type of spiritual thought and life can claim to be Christian, is a question which must also be determined by an appeal to Christ. Does it frankly recognise His unique claims? Is it governed by His laws? Is it rooted in that conception of God and of man's relations to God which was asserted in His teaching and in His history? Or is it a type of thought and life which springs from an imperfect acceptance of what Christ has revealed, and from the suppression of any of His characteristic doctrines or precepts? This is the method of Protestantism. It is an appeal to the supremacy of Scripture—I prefer to speak of the supremacy of Christ—in the decision of all religious controversies. This method illustrates what we

mean when we say that Christianity is an historical religion. Christianity rests upon the revelation of God in Christ. It is built upon a system of supernatural facts which determine our relations to God, and which should also determine our thoughts of God, our ideal of religious perfection, our religious hopes, and the whole conduct of our religious life.

But Christianity is an historical religion in a secondary sense. It has been in the world for eighteen centuries. It has had its struggles and its triumphs, its heroes and its martyrs, its apostles and its saints. It has subdued kingdoms and wrought righteousness. It has given a new form to the civilisation of powerful races ; it has controlled their laws, improved their morals, moulded their manners ; it has left its impress on their literature and their art. It has organised great spiritual societies ; it has constructed systems of doctrine ; it has originated new ideals of ethical perfection. It has been a definite and recognised force in the history of Europe and America, and has exercised a certain measure of influence over Africa and the East.

Its history, I say, has been a succession of conflicts. There have been vicissitudes of reformation and corruption, revival and decay. But there has been no real break of continuity. The movement has retained throughout substantial identity. The great facts on which the Christian faith is founded have never been forgotten or denied. The spiritual truths which are the inheritance of the Church have been

obscured and perverted by forms of speculation alien from the spirit and genius of the Christian faith ; its ethics have been debased ; the conception of the religious life has been impaired in different countries and in different centuries by a thousand influences hostile to the original conception of Christian holiness ; priests have manipulated the institutions and the sacraments of the Church for the aggrandisement of their order ; and yet the Christian tradition has never been lost, in doctrine, in morals, or in the spiritual life. The great foundations of faith are the same in the writings of Clement of Rome, of Augustine, and of Luther ; in the creeds of the Eastern and of the Western Church. There is a broad basis of unity underlying the faith of the theologians who drew up the decrees of the Council of Trent, and of the theologians who drew up the Westminster Confession. The ethics of Christianity have preserved their originality. Its ideal of spiritual perfection has never been destroyed. The great saints of the ancient and of the modern Church are akin ; whatever varieties of temperament and of discipline may distinguish them from each other, the central elements and forces of their spiritual character are the same. There is, therefore, a secondary sense in which Christianity is an historical religion.

As Christian Churches, we are under an imperative obligation to be faithful to Christ, the Founder of the Church ; and it should occasion us anxiety, and even alarm, if we discover that we are losing our hold of

any of those great elements of faith and of the spiritual life which have remained constant in the Church through all the vicissitudes of its history.

With these considerations distinctly present to our minds, I wish to consider this morning one conspicuous aspect of the religious thought and religious life of our own times. It seems to me that on one point we are separating ourselves not only from that great Evangelical Revival which renewed the fire and energy of our Churches a hundred years ago, but from the whole of the Christian Church of the past eighteen centuries, and are also in danger of going into open revolt against the authority of Christ.

How is it that we think so little, say so little, feel so little, about the Forgiveness of Sins?

That the subject had a great place in our Lord's teaching there can be no dispute. In the prayer which He taught His disciples—the prayer which most of us were taught to offer morning and evening when we were children—this is one of the few petitions: "Forgive us our trespasses." When He instituted the Lord's Supper—the most solemn and pathetic of all the services of the Church—He said that His blood was shed for the remission of sins. And now after the resurrection, when He is making it clear to His friends that He has fulfilled the prophecies of the Messiah, He says, "Thus it behoved the Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and *remission of sins* should be preached among all nations."

He recalls and sanctions the ancient religion of the Jewish people at the same time that He commands His Apostles to preach the new Gospel to all nations ; and I need only remind you that in the Old Testament, as well as in the New, men are urged and encouraged to repentance by the assurance that if they repent of sin and forsake it, God will grant them Forgiveness. Nor need I do more than remind you that the Jewish prophets and psalmists, and the Christian apostles, never seem able to give full expression to their wonder and joy that God should be willing to forgive. The blessing of Forgiveness seemed to them a blessing of infinite value ; and when they were assured that they had received it, they were inspired with exultation and rapture.

I wish to ask how it is that in these days we think so little about the Forgiveness of sins.

It is my impression that both religious people and those who do not profess to be religious must be conscious that God's Forgiveness, if they ever think of it at all, does not create any deep and strong emotion. We can get excited about many other things, but not about this. Few of us have felt any agony of desire to obtain it ; few of us have felt any great delight even if we think we have received it.

The difference between the way in which *we* think of the Divine Forgiveness and the way in which it was thought of by David and Isaiah, by Christ Himself, by Peter, Paul, and John ; by the saints of all Christian Churches in past times, both in the East and

in the West, among both Protestants and Catholics; by the founders of the English Church, by the Puritans, by the Nonconformists of the seventeenth century, by both the Methodist and Calvinistic leaders of the Evangelical Revival in the last century — the difference, I say, between the way in which the Forgiveness of sins was thought of by them, and the way in which we think of it, is very startling. The difference is so great, it affects so seriously the whole system of the religious thought and life, that we may be said to have invented a new religion. The subject is plainly of supreme importance. It reaches far deeper than the differences which separate Church from Church.

For myself, I stand by the ancient faith, and believe that the indifference with which the Forgiveness of sins is regarded in these times is no evidence of the development and progress of religious thought, but a result of the decline of faith in the living God.

The Forgiveness of sins—what does it mean?

If I attempted to explain it in the language which was used by the writers of both the Old Testament and the New, which was used incessantly by the leaders of the Evangelical Revival, and which continued to be used almost to our own day, I should probably lead you to misunderstand it, and should provoke strong moral antagonism. And yet I think that I must remind you what that language was. In the Bible God is described as being angry against sin, and angry against those who commit sin; when God

forgives a man who has sinned, God ceases to be angry with him. Sometimes still stronger language is used. Prophets and apostles speak about the Divine wrath ; they say that those who are guilty of sin are in danger of being consumed by this wrath ;—when God forgives those who have sinned, His wrath cools and He is at peace with them.

I do not complain that men dislike to hear of the anger and the wrath of God. The meaning and force of language change with the changing customs and tempers of men. Words receive a broader or a narrower sense as time goes on. They become entangled with new associations ; they are released from associations which once controlled their meaning. Words which once had a great variety of uses come to be closely restricted to a more definite service. We are so rarely excited to passionate emotion by moral evil from which we receive no personal harm, that when we hear of a man being hot with anger or blazing with wrath, we nearly always suppose that the excitement has been provoked by an insult to his honour, by a slander on his reputation, by an act of treachery which has ruined his fortunes, or of cruelty which has inflicted irreparable mischief on those whom he loves. The words might always have been used to describe emotions of this kind—emotions created or aggravated by personal suffering ; but they might also be used, and indeed they may be used still, to denote a man's moral resentment against wickedness from which he has received no personal injury.

Anger in its lower forms, wrath in its common manifestations, is measured, not by the moral fault of the person who excites it, but by the extent of the loss, the pain, the harm, which the fault has inflicted. But moral resentment takes no account of personal suffering, and is kindled to its fiercest heat by the moral evil which has provoked it, and by the moral evil only.

Now, when men asked God to forgive them—and meant it—they were thinking of this moral resentment which they had provoked by their sin. They called it anger and wrath. And they were filled with agony when they knew that they were the objects of it. They knew, I say, that they themselves were the objects of this wrath. For sin is not a mere abstraction. It is not an idea. It is not something in the air. It is an intensely personal thing. Where there is lying there must be a liar. Where there is habitual drunkenness there must be a drunkard. Where there is murder there must be a murderer. God's moral resentment against sin is resentment against the man who has sinned, so long as the man is not forgiven.

Resentment against sin is an element of the very life of God. It can no more be separated from God than heat from fire. When men prayed God to forgive them, they did not mean that God should cease to feel resentment against sin, but that He should cease to feel resentment against themselves, although they had been guilty of sin.

Read the lives of good men in other ages, and you

will find that in almost all cases, at some period of their religious life—commonly but not uniformly at the commencement of it — they were filled with anguish by their sense of this Divine moral resentment. They had a vivid sense of its reality. They felt how terrible it was. To them it was a fiery wrath—but a moral wrath, measured by their guilt. It was intolerable, it was appalling ; but it was deserved ; and therefore they cried out in agony for God's forgiveness. That it should be possible for God to forgive them seemed very wonderful ; for they felt that their sins were a part of themselves, and that God could not be wroth with their sins without being wroth with them. How was it possible for Him to separate between a sinful man and his sin ? When they discovered that God was able and eager to forgive them, they were filled with joy ; when they were sure that He had actually forgiven them, their joy often rose to ecstasy.

The tradition of this remains in many of our Churches. There is still a general conviction among our people that conversion ought always to begin with vivid distress on account of sin and a great dread of the Divine anger. If men are led to trust in Christ as their Saviour and to obey Him as their Prince without passing through this period of suffering, the reality of their religious life is not doubted, but their religious history is regarded as exceptional and abnormal. I think, too, that many of our people would suppose that there was something wanting in

it. But I imagine that great distress on account of sin is becoming less and less common, and that, in our days, most persons who trust in Christ for eternal redemption think more about being made better in the future than about being forgiven for the sins of the past.

How is it that the dread of the Divine anger and the passionate longing for the Divine Forgiveness have disappeared?

Our moral nature has, perhaps, become flaccid and sluggish. There is less fire of any kind in us than was common in other times. But there are deeper reasons, and the deepest reason of all seems to me to be this—in these last times we have broken with historical Christianity; we have largely departed from the Christian tradition; we have invented a new kind of religion—a religion which may claim the merit of originality; at least, there is originality in supposing that it is the religion of Christ. We have invented a religion without God.¹

¹ I leave this paragraph and the paragraphs which immediately follow it just as I preached them. Some of those who heard the sermon misunderstood them. Of course, I did not mean that modern religion is literally a religion without God. But when I was writing the sermon I had a deep and painful sense of the danger to which we are exposed by all the currents of our time to relegate the Living God to a subordinate position in our religious life. If the paragraphs are interpreted as describing a *tendency*, they will convey my exact thought. When a man writes under strong emotion, a "tendency" is sometimes treated as though it had already become a fact. And

We are willing to keep everything else as far as we can that the saints of former times held dear ; but we are making the experiment of how human life can be ordered without God ; and especially we are making the experiment of how much religion is possible and how much Christianity is possible without God. We like to have prayers : but prayers without God—prayers full of beautiful and graceful thought concerning human life, full of pathetic representations of the hopes and fears and struggles of men ; prayers which are so sympathetic and touching that they soothe and quiet the heart that listens to them, and make Divine comfort unnecessary ; prayers which draw us into deeper and closer fellowship with the life of the man who offers them than with the life of God Himself. We like to sing hymns : but hymns about ourselves, not about God ; hymns which tranquillise us by their peacefulness, charm us by their beauty, melt us by their sadness, or animate us with their joy. We like to listen to preaching : but to preaching about man, not about God ; about human duty, human suffering, human perplexity, the strength of human virtue, the severity of human temptation. We ask for vivid and picturesque descriptions of the common life of the race, for keen and shrewd criticism of human folly, presumption, and vanity ; for sympathy with the golden hopes of youth, with the

I fear that the tendency of which I was thinking has actually become a fact in the case of very many persons who are within the range of Evangelical and other forms of " orthodox " teaching.

struggles of the iron age of manhood, and with the memories and regrets of those whose years are almost spent and whose strength has almost gone. We like to have religious sentiment : but we can get it without God, and we are satisfied ; we can get it by a beautiful service, and by imaginative and pathetic preaching. What we call religious sentiment comes to us just as freely when we are on the mountain-side or on the sea-shore, and when our mind is filled with the majesty of the mountain and the vastness of the ocean, as when we are in church and are listening to the words of ancient Jewish saints about the Divine majesty and the Divine greatness. It comes to some of us more readily when we are reading the words of a poet who had no Christian faith at all, than when we are reading the words of St. Paul or St. John. It comes to us when we are leaning against the stately columns of some venerable Romish cathedral, and are looking at the distant altar with its lights shining out brightly from the surrounding gloom, and are watching the movements and listening to the chants of vested priests celebrating what we believe to be a superstitious service ;—what we call religious sentiment, I say, comes to us then with even greater depth and warmth, than when we are kneeling alone in the presence of God. It is religious sentiment of a kind which makes God unnecessary.

And how is it with the practical life of men who regard mere religious sentiment with mistrust ? With some of the best men among us, conscience is

the supreme moral authority ; and if they are faithful to conscience, they claim to be religious men. But conscience is not God ; it is man's sense of the obligation of righteousness ; and I have never yet been able to see why an atheist may not have a conscience as well as a Christian. In the long run, indeed, I believe that atheism is fatal to that energy and depth of the moral life from which the decisions of conscience derive clearness and authority ; but let a man be trained in a country which has inherited a Christian civilisation, and he may have a vigorous conscience though he has renounced his faith in the very existence of God.

Those who have made conscience the supreme authority cannot be agitated by any dread of the Divine resentment against sin, and cannot be anxious for the Divine Forgiveness ; it is the condemnation of conscience which they fear. They may appeal to God ; but it is for redemption from the moral and spiritual evil which conscience condemns. Nor does the idea of Forgiveness in any form enter as a real and efficient factor into their moral life. Conscience is their ruler, not God, and conscience never forgives. By the lapse of time old offences may be forgotten ; but conscience—apart from the Divine Mercy—never pardons them. Sins which once provoked the sharp rebuke of conscience may be abandoned, but the old sins, when they are remembered, are condemned, and the man is condemned for committing them ; for, I repeat, conscience has no authority to forgive. When

God is denied supremacy in the moral life, and conscience is enthroned in His place, the Forgiveness of sins awakens no interest.

Perhaps you say—"No, we believe in God ; but we believe that He is merciful and compassionate, and we have rejected those stern and gloomy thoughts of Him which characterised the theology of former days."

This is a bold claim. There is an audacity in it which ought to prevent us from asserting it unless we are sure that we can make it good. You say that you believe that God is merciful and compassionate, and you allege this as the reason why you are less concerned about the Forgiveness of sins than the saints of former ages. But did not *they* believe in the mercy of God ? Is your faith in "the unsearchable riches of His grace" larger and freer than St. Paul's ? Yet the remission of sins was one of the principal subjects of his preaching. Is the God you worship more merciful than the God whom Christ revealed ? Have you advanced beyond Christ ? And yet Christ preached the remission of sins, and said that He died to secure it for us.

Look at the claim again. God is merciful—what does this mean ? It means a willingness to lay aside resentment against those who have sinned. But it follows that the greater the resentment, the greater is the mercy ; if there is very little resentment, there can be very little mercy ; if there is no resentment at all, mercy is impossible. The difference between our

religion and the religion of other times is this—that we do not believe that God has any strong resentment against sin or against those who are guilty of sin. And since His resentment has gone, His mercy has gone with it. We have not a God who is more merciful than the God of our fathers, but a God who is less righteous ; and a God who is not righteous, a God who does not glow with fiery indignation against sin, is no God at all.

Or, perhaps, you say that the remission of sins has lost its great place in the religious thought of our age because men have ceased to believe in the everlasting suffering of the impenitent. But do you mean to argue that, apart from the fear of everlasting suffering, God's resentment against sin is nothing very awful, that it need not alarm us, that there is no reason why we should have any agony of desire for His Forgiveness? If that is what you mean, then, intolerable as the doctrine of everlasting suffering seems to me to be, and without any foundation in the New Testament, the error which has disappeared has carried with it one of the central moral truths of the Christian faith.

Perhaps, however, it was one of the evil results of the doctrine which is now rapidly losing its hold on the mind and heart of the Church, that everlasting suffering so possessed the popular imagination that the thought of God's moral resentment against sin was sometimes almost lost. When some men prayed

for God's Forgiveness, it was only because they feared that if they were not forgiven, they would be tortured eternally in those awful fires. It was not the cessation of God's present moral wrath against them on account of their sins that they asked for, but escape from those everlasting flames. Now that the flames have become unreal, such men may think that there is nothing left to fear.

But do you who claim to be liberals in religious thought; you who think you have grasped the highest moral and spiritual truths of the Christian faith; you who are never weary of expressing your abhorrence and scorn of the selfishness and baseness of ancient appeals to the dread of future punishment; do you share all that was most selfish and base in the temper of mind to which these appeals were addressed, and by which they were sometimes inspired? Are you, too, like a boy who, when he has escaped the fear of the lash for his misconduct, feels that there is nothing to trouble him in his father's moral displeasure? Are you, too, like a criminal who, when he has escaped conviction through a technical blunder in the indictment, is quiet and happy because he is not to be sent to prison, and regards with unconcern the moral indignation of mankind? Is there nothing in God's anger to fear—nothing to occasion distress and terror—now that you have discovered that He will not inflict everlasting pains? If this is the spirit of modern liberal Christianity, may God keep me faithful to the spirit of the saints of past generations!

To the deeper thought of the Church the future punishment of the impenitent was always the expression of the moral resentment of God against sin. This was the chief element of its terror. It was not to be a wild vengeance, but was to be inflicted after the solemnities of a judgment. It seemed infinite, because God's anger against sin seemed to have no limit. Let there be a return to a deep faith in the Living God, and a recovery of the realisation of God's abhorrence of sin, and then, once more, men conscious of guilt will cry to Him with passionate earnestness to forgive them. Meanwhile, men are careless about the Divine Forgiveness because they disbelieve in the Divine resentment against moral evil ; they even think that such resentment would be unjust.

I said just now that a God without moral resentment against sin would be a God not worth keeping ; it is also true that such a God will never long retain a place in the heart and thought of mankind. To the human soul righteousness is supreme, and whenever the righteousness of God is forgotten—His abhorrence of sin, His anger against it—then, no matter with what imaginary glory, no matter with what spiritual beauty, no matter with what tenderness of love and pity He is invested, His power over the heart and conscience of man is gone. And we, I fear, have forgotten God's righteousness, and so God Himself is passing out of our life. Yes, in every direction I see the signs that we are living without God—in the Church as well as in the world.

In our very religion God has a secondary place. We have made ourselves the centre of our religious thought. We are conscious that we ourselves are alive, but *He* has ceased to be the Living God, with an infinite fervour of joy in righteousness—which is obedience to His will; and an infinite fervour of hatred for sin—which is the transgression of His commandments. In morals we think of our own conscience—not of God's law; of our self-respect—not of God's approval; and we are distressed by self-reproach—not by God's displeasure and God's anger. We fail to recognise in conscience the minister of a more august Power and the echo of a more awful Voice. In our sorrow we expect to find consolation, not in the Divine compassion, but in the soothing influence of religious meditation; and strength, not in the inspiration of God, but in the vigour and depth of religious emotion which may be stirred by noble thoughts concerning life and duty, or by the bold and heroic temper of a sacred song. In our very worship we are chiefly solicitous for the Epicurean indulgence of religious sentiment, and are satisfied with whatever awakens it. We are touched by the pathos of a prayer instead of being filled with wonder and devout fear by the presence of God, and with infinite hope by the wealth of His love.

A Church which has lost its God—what is it worth? where is its power? Brethren, we must try to find God again. When we have found Him, and not till then, we shall know something of the agitation and

fear with which the penitent of all ages have trembled in the presence of His anger, and something of the surprise and rapture with which they have listened to these words of Christ—that in His name the remission of sins is to be preached to all nations. We shall recover our communion with the saints of all centuries and of all Churches. We shall be conscious that we, too, are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, and that we are living stones in that majestic and glorious temple which has been erected by the courage, the patience, the purity, the devoutness of every succeeding generation. We shall verify the last and highest claim of Christ as the Redeemer of mankind, and having received from His lips the Forgiveness of sins, shall be able to testify that He is the Way to the Father.

VIII.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE CONVERSION OF MEN.¹

Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this ? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?—ACTS iii. 12.

IT was very natural that the people who saw the lame beggar, whom they knew so well, walking and leaping and praising God, should crowd round Peter and John, who had healed him, and should look at them with wonder and awe. I think that we should have done the same. They had seen the man carried morning after morning to the gate of the temple ; they had seen him lying there every hour in the day ; they probably knew that he had been born lame ; many of them, no doubt, had often thrown him a few copper coins as they passed through the magnificent gate ; and now they saw him not only walking, but, as was natural in a man who had just got the use of his feet, leaping and praising God. The man would not let the apostles go, but kept fast hold of their long Eastern robes. The people came

¹ Preached at Southport, February 9, 1880, at the Ordination of the Rev. J. E. Lucas.

thronging into the cloisters, called Solomon's porch, on the eastern side of the temple, and stood looking at Peter and John, greatly wondering.

Peter, seeing the temper of the crowd, addresses them. He tells them that the miracle had been wrought by the power of Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had killed, but whom God had raised from the dead. They thought that His claims were crushed when He was crucified on Calvary; but God had glorified Him, and He, through the faith which the apostles had in Him, had made the man strong whom they saw and knew.

The disposition of the crowd to make heroes of the apostles when they should have recognised in the miracle the power of God is an illustration of a common instinct. The instinct is not altogether mischievous. When through foreign invasion or internal revolution the institutions of society are broken up, the blind submission which a whole nation sometimes yields to a popular chief, whose words or achievements have touched its imagination, or to the heir of an illustrious name associated with the past glories of the State, sometimes renders it possible to restore law and order. The intellectual supremacy of great men, a supremacy which has been acknowledged in some rare cases for a long succession of centuries, has also its uses; it preserves something like order in our intellectual life. Aristotle and the great poets of Greece have not only received the homage of the commonalty of mankind, they have ruled and directed

the men of genius of later ages, and have prevented a great waste of intellectual power. It is the same with that conspicuous moral excellence which wins more reverential homage than that which we offer to genius in even its loftiest forms. The lives of philanthropists, patriots, and saints have stimulated obscure and unknown men to live nobly, and have raised the common standard of morality; their example has been a law to successive generations.

But have you ever observed that there is nothing that can be called hero-worship either in the Old Testament or the New? The Jews had their daring fighting men, their poets, their orators, their statesmen, their saints; but you find no disposition in the Old Testament Scriptures to attribute to any of them the kind of authority attributed to great men by other races; you find no disposition to surround them with the same kind of glory. The heroism of Wallace is commemorated in the national songs of Scotland, and the Swiss have transmitted from generation to generation the story of the heroism of William Tell; but there is no Psalm to celebrate the heroism of David. The women of Israel came out to meet him after one of his victories, and welcomed him with songs of triumph; but then, as far as we can see, the personal celebration was over. Nor does Jewish history exalt Moses as the history of Europe exalts Charlemagne, as the history of England exalts Alfred or Elizabeth. The genius of Isaiah does not receive the same kind of homage that we concede to the genius of Dante or

of Shakespeare. There is the same absence of hero-worship in the New Testament. Christ stands apart. He is God manifest in the flesh. To have seen Him is to have seen the Father. But the apostles assume no personal greatness; no personal greatness is claimed for them. Their authority was the authority of their Master. Luke never analyses their power nor dwells upon their personal qualities. He tells the story of their work with what might appear a complete absence of admiration for the men themselves. That they were in any way remarkable and eminent is never intentionally suggested. The saints of the Old Testament and the saints of the New are transparent; God shines through them. Their own personal importance is not merely suppressed; neither they nor their historians ever had to suppress it; it is never thought of. The history of the very greatest of them is a striking commentary on the words of our Lord: "*Let your light . . . shine before men that they may glorify your Father who is in heaven.*"

That is the Christian law; and, indeed, as I have said, it is the law which had been illustrated in the Jewish Scriptures long before Christ appeared. Are men steadfast in righteousness, fervent in charity, temperate, fearless? Do not glorify *them*; glorify God who made them so good. Are they wise? Glorify God who is the Giver of wisdom. Have they genius? Glorify God who kindled its fires. Have they wrought great deliverances for mankind? Why look ye on *them* as though by their own power or

holiness they had wrought these deliverances? Joshua fought well; but when the men of later days look back upon his victories, they say—

“ We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work Thou didst in their days, in the times of old. How Thou didst drive out the heathen with Thy hand, and plantedst them. For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but Thy right hand, and Thine arm, and the light of Thy countenance, because Thou hadst a favour unto them.”

This was the temper of the nation in its noblest times.

And when we come to the New Testament we find the greatest of the apostles saying, *“ I planted, Apollos watered, and God gave the increase.”* This address of St. Peter’s about the miracle is a vivid illustration of the spirit of both Testaments. Good works are God’s works; it is His strength which makes us strong, His wisdom which makes us wise. We are His servants, and the honour of all our success is His and not ours.

In recent times we have failed to maintain the traditional spirit of Judaism and of Christianity. We dwell on the personal goodness, the temperament, and the intellectual power of Peter, Paul, and John; we treat them as ordinary historians treat sovereigns like Elizabeth and Cromwell, statesmen like Burghley and Walpole and Chatham. We inquire what there was in the men that accounted for the success of their work — what power, what holiness, explains their

achievements. No doubt their personal character and their intellectual force had a direct relation to their work. Peter's vehemence and warmth of nature, his natural audacity and his vigorous sense ; Paul's keen logical subtlety, his passion, his restless enterprise and his affectionate heart ; the quiet depths in the soul of St. John, lying far beneath the stormy energy of his passion, as the calm depths of the Atlantic lie beneath the winds and tempests which sometimes disturb its surface—all these had a part in determining the kind of service to which each of them was appointed. They received supernatural gifts varying according to their native capacity, and according to the type of character which had been formed by their personal history. But the gifts were from God ; their power was His. Their work was God's work, not their own. In the spiritual, as in the natural life, when the blind receive sight, Christ gives it ; when the lame walk, it is Christ who makes them strong ; when the dead rise, they rise at Christ's voice ; " His name through faith in His name, hath made this man strong " is the explanation of all wonders.

Wycliffe, Luther, Calvin, Baxter, Wesley, and Whitefield, what were they all but ministers, servants of God by whom England or Europe came to know and believe a truer Gospel than it knew or believed before ? They should be transparent to us as the Jewish prophets and heroes were transparent to the ancient saints, and as the Christian apostles were transparent to the early Church. Their noble qualities, their

eloquence, their learning, their courage, their zeal, may be recognised, and may be honoured as God's gifts ; but still it was not their power or their holiness that first loosened and then broke the fetters by which the spiritual life of nations was bound — drove the darkness away and brought in the true light that now shineth—called men from the graves into the upper air and the sunlight of heaven ; it was *God* who did it all.

This holds true of all effective spiritual work in our own time, and it is a truth which we may well consider this evening. We are meeting in connection with the ordination of the Pastor of many persons who are in this congregation. He will conduct your worship ; he will teach those of you who know something of the infinite love and righteousness of God how to do God's will. I want you to remember that it will not be by the "power" or the "holiness" of your minister that your worship will be made devout or that your knowledge of God will be enriched. Apart from the light and power of the Spirit of Christ the work of my friend will be a failure.

I understand that the congregation has been formed very recently, and that a great part of my friend's work will be directed to those who have not yet taken sides with Christ. Perhaps, therefore, it is especially necessary that I should insist on the truth that when men are prevailed upon to submit to Christ's authority, to break with sin and to begin to live a Christian life, their great decision is not to be attributed to the impassioned eloquence, the vigorous argument, the

pathetic entreaty of the preacher, nor to his personal sanctity, nor to his fervent zeal ; it is not to be attributed, I say, either to the preacher's " power " or to the preacher's " holiness," but to the direct appeal of the Spirit of God to the conscience and to the heart. This is the truth on which I intend to speak to-night.

You remember that Christ promised that when the Spirit came He would do a wonderful work in the world as well as in the Church. During His earthly life Christ Himself had been the great preacher, and when He was about to die the apostles must have been in despair, not only about themselves, but about the fortunes of the Gospel. What lips had a charm like His ? Who could speak with the pathos, the tenderness, the authority with which He had spoken ? What faultless beauty as well as perfect simplicity there was in His parables ! What power in His appeals to the consciences of men ! How wonderfully He could excite their hopes, fire their imagination, melt their hearts ! What terror there was in His threatenings ! How was the Gospel to be preached to any purpose when He was no longer in the world to preach it ? But if it was expedient for His friends that He should go away, it was also expedient for the world ; for when the Spirit came He would convince the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment. The Spirit was to comfort, strengthen, and teach those who loved Christ already ; the Spirit was also to bring the enemies of Christ to Christ's feet.

The leaders of the Evangelical Revival believed this with all their heart ; they relied upon the presence and power of the Spirit of God for the conversion of men. I wonder whether we have the same faith.

Everything short of the actual conversion of men to God we can accomplish without God's help. Canvass the town for children and you can fill your Sunday schools. Make the teaching interesting and attractive, let the rooms be bright and warm and pleasant, have cheerful singing, let the teacher be kindly, genial, and earnest, and you can keep the children when you have them ; and not only keep them, but enable them to pass excellent examinations in Old Testament history and New Testament doctrine ; and, more than that, you can soften their manners and refine their tastes and elevate their morals. All this you can do without God ; if you are satisfied with this there is no need to pray to God. But if you want the children to love and serve Christ, the Spirit of God must be with you, and must work directly on the inner thought and life of your scholars.

Build an attractive church, get a good organ and choir, let there be an educated and earnest and eloquent man in the pulpit,—fearless, thoughtful, and kindly,—and you can get a crowd of people to hear him. He may produce a profound impression by his preaching. The great topics of the Christian preacher — life, death, and eternity, the righteousness of God and the sin of man, the Divine pity and human sorrow, human temptations and

human duties, the fair hopes of childhood, the hot passions of youth, the cares of maturer years, the lassitude and weariness of old age, the struggles of the Church in other centuries and in our own days, its reverses and its triumphs, its doctrinal controversies, its conflicts with doubt and with sin—all these are topics which have an incomparable and unrivalled charm for all sorts of men. Let the preacher have learning, intellectual vigour and freshness, wit, imagination, ardour, and sympathy, he can use them all, and men will throng to listen to him. They will listen with admiration and sometimes with deep emotion; they will be agitated and excited; yes, and they will become ashamed of many of their sins and will begin to discharge many neglected duties; religious sentiment will be created; they will sing devout hymns with profound feeling; will listen to prayers with reverence and awe. All this may be done without God; but if men are to be moved to real penitence, and are to be inspired with real faith, the light and power of the Holy Spirit must reach individual hearts.

Many of us know what this means. For years we were familiar with truths which ought to have exerted irresistible control over us; we believed them; sometimes we felt their power. But we can remember when these very truths came to us as though we had never known them before. Perhaps there was excitement when they came, perhaps they came to us in our most quiet

moods. However they came, it seemed hardly possible to resist them. The Divine love in its tenderness, the Divine authority in its majesty, the infinite mercy of Christ, the guilt of unbelief, the beauty, the righteousness, and the immortal hopes of the Christian life, these, or some of these, were presented to us in a way which carried our whole nature with them. Perhaps we were listening to a sermon ; but we had listened to sermons before, and to sermons not less clear, not less impressive, not less earnest, and had listened unmoved ; others heard the same sermon and it did not touch them. Perhaps we were reading a book ; but we had read the book before, and it had never taught us what we now learnt, and others have read the same book and learnt nothing from it. What made the difference was a silent voice to which then, for the first time, we consented to listen. The Spirit of God came to us, and we suffered Him to lead us into the truth.

This work of His is not, as some theologians have described it, a work of irresistible grace ; it is the direct appeal of the Infinite Spirit to the human spirit, fruitful if yielded to in immortal blessings ; but, like other appeals, it may be resisted.

Our perverse reluctance to think of God aright, and to believe with all our heart that all life and light come from Him, is inexplicable. We have to learn the same lesson over and over again in many forms—our life seems spent in learning it ; and we look

back upon wasted years, years of unvictorious struggle, of unprofitable labour, of hope only partially fulfilled or perhaps altogether baffled, and mourn that we had not learnt the open secret earlier which would have made all those years bright with noble and glorious success.

The lesson has to be learnt at the beginning of the religious life, and some of us learn it very slowly. We want the pardon of sin and that change in the very centre and root of our religious life which will render it possible for us to do the will of God. And we try—perhaps for months, perhaps for years—to make our penitence for sin more agonising and our hunger and thirst for righteousness more keen, hoping that at last we shall have rest of heart, the assurance that sin has been forgiven, and strength to keep God's commandments. It is all in vain; and then we discover what we knew from the first—that we can trust God to forgive us our sins, and to forgive us our impenitence too, and to inspire us with the life and power of the Holy Ghost: we trust Him and we pass into a new world.

But the lesson has to be learnt over again. We are now liberated from distress about our past guilt, and we know that we are the sons of God and the heirs of His glory; but we find that we are unequal to many duties, and are overcome by many temptations. We subject ourselves to discipline; perhaps we fast; we certainly pray; we think upon the transcendent motives to righteousness—the judgment

to come, the infinite mercy which died for us, the beauty of holiness, the glory, honour, and immortality which are to crown patient continuance in well-doing. It is all in vain ; we make no way ; we are perpetually thwarted, hindered, defeated. And then, again, we discover what a child might have taught us, what we always knew, that evil passions are to be burnt down to their very roots by the fire of God ; that we are to be strong for holy living in the strength of God : we trust in Him once more, and as long as we trust we are kept in perfect peace, and our life is free and bright and triumphant.

But we have not learnt the lesson even now. We engage in Christian work, and are hot and eager to rescue men from sin and eternal death. We do our best—teachers, preachers, or visitors, whatever else we may be—yes, our very best, and hardly anything comes of it. We put all our strength into our work—God has a right to ask for it ; we spare no time, no energetic effort of thought ; we ask how other men have succeeded, and try to learn from them how we may succeed ourselves ; we are in deadly earnest and struggle as if for our own salvation, and still we accomplish nothing. Then once more we discover what we always knew ; God and only God can bring right home to man the truth which is on our lips : we trust in Him, and then our work begins to prosper.

I was never more deeply convinced than I am now that for the work of the Christian ministry it is neces-

sary to secure men of conspicuous intellectual power, and men who have received the most thorough and stimulating and invigorating intellectual training. For the most ordinary duties of the ministry some fair measure of learning is necessary ; and if a man is to speak on religion to any purpose, he must have the kind of power and discipline and knowledge which would enable him to speak to some purpose on other subjects. We have had enough, and more than enough, of ignorance, shallowness, and imbecility in the Christian pulpit. There is an Antinomianism in relation to Christian work not less fatal and far more subtle than the Antinomianism of the Christian life.

Men have argued that since they can do nothing for their own salvation without God, they will attempt nothing, and will leave all to Him. They might as well say that they can get no harvest without the rain of heaven and the heat and light of the sun, and that therefore they will not plough nor sow. And men have argued, that since Christian work can never achieve its highest results apart from the direct appeal of the Spirit of God to the souls of men, the intellectual power and cultivation of the teacher and preacher are worthless, that learning is worthless, and eloquence worthless, and that we should leave everything to God. What folly, what insanity there is in this ! It is, I repeat, the very spirit, showing itself in Christian work, which when it shows itself in the personal Christian life we call Antinomianism.

But among ourselves there are not many who are

likely to be infected with this heresy. Our peril—your peril and mine—lies in the opposite direction. We are in danger of forgetting that when we have done our utmost, everything will be in vain apart from the power of God.

We look back upon the great evangelists of past generations and think that if we could only have them with us again the most glorious days in the history of the Church would return. If St. Bernard were here, with his fiery passion, a passion which kindled his intellectual life as well as his heart; if Luther were here, with his frankness, his audacity and his immense moral force; if Whitefield were here, with his affectionate spirit and his charming eloquence; if Wesley were here, with his calm and resolute strength and his keen sagacity—then we might hope to see a great religious reformation in England. But what can *we* do—we whose ardour is so easily chilled, whose faith is so easily shaken, and to whom the spells by which genius can touch and subdue the hearts of men are quite unknown. This self-distrust is only the specious cover of a want of faith in God. The illustrious preachers of former days are with us no longer and seem to have left no successors; but the great Preacher of all is with us still—the only Preacher whose voice can raise the dead, the Preacher whose power achieved all the triumphs which we connect with the famous and sacred names in the history of Christendom. It is not for us to despair because Bernard, Luther, Whitefield, Wesley, have

passed away. The despair would be the sign that we had ascribed their success to their own "power and holiness," instead of to the Spirit of God. Could these great saints come back again, it would not be to take the work from our hands because we are unequal to it, but to tell us that the same Spirit that was with them can still reach the hearts and consciences of men.

Even when we pray we sometimes forget that our trust should be in the Spirit of God. We ask that for the success of our work we ourselves may have a larger knowledge of the thought of God, a more fervent passion for the honour of Christ, a profounder solicitude for the rescue of men from their sorrows and their sins—wise and necessary prayers, but incomplete, fatally incomplete. For the prayers imply that if we ourselves had greater "power," the power which would come to us from a deeper knowledge of God and a firmer loyalty to Christ and a more ardent love for mankind ; if we had greater "holiness"—the holiness which would be the result of a more complete consecration of all our strength to God's service—we should be certain to be successful. This was not what the apostles thought—"Paul planted, Apollos watered, God gave the increase."

Let us cease to trust in men and trust only in God. Yes, in *God* ; not in men ; and not in ecclesiastical systems. For what is true of men is also true of ecclesiastical systems. It is not the perfection of its organisation that enables a Church to redeem men from

their sins and to lead them in the paths of righteousness. There have been preachers in the Church of Rome, spite of its monstrous polity, who have done infinitely more for mankind and for God than whole crowds of preachers, eloquent, learned, and orthodox, in the purest of Protestant Churches. There is no "power," no "holiness" in Presbyterianism, in Methodism, in Congregationalism, in Episcopacy, to work the spiritual miracles by which the lives of individuals and of communities are transformed. The chief merit of an ecclesiastical system lies in the measure in which it is transparent and lets the glory of Christ shine through. We are in the right, as I think, in our ecclesiastical polity; we refuse to cover the windows of our church organisation with the purple and golden glories of a stately hierarchy; but if there is no sun shining in the heavens the simplest windows will let in no more light than those which are thickly covered with sacred legends. For it is not the windows that give the light, they only let it come into the building. And even when the sun is shining—to keep up the illustration—it sometimes happens that the simplest windows are so covered with dust and dirt as to prevent the glory from breaking through, while windows of another sort, kept bright and clean, may permit the whole building to be filled with splendour. It is not a good ecclesiastical system, I repeat, that saves mankind, but Christ; the best system is that which lets nothing come between Christ and the Church.

The same test is to be applied to all theologies and to all methods of spiritual discipline. It is an incidental measure of their wisdom and their truth. Do they make us forget ourselves and remember only Christ? Do they break down everything that comes between the soul and Him who is the fountain of mercy and of power? The question of the *truth* of theologies is the first question to be settled, but this is an incidental test of their truth.

Tell me that my good works are necessary before Christ will forgive my sins, and you put months, and perhaps years, of painful moral struggle between me and Christ; tell me that He will forgive me at once, as soon as I come to Him, and that then He will stand by me in all my endeavours to keep His commandments, and Christ is already at my side at the very beginning of my new life. The doctrine of justification by works seems less likely to be true than the doctrine of justification by faith.

Tell me that to make sure of the Divine forgiveness I must confess my sins to a priest, and there is danger lest the priest should come between me and Christ. Tell me that I can confess to Christ Himself, and that the priest is unnecessary, then, again, Christ is near to me while I am in the agony of my repentance and while the dark shadow of evil years still lies heavily on my heart. The doctrine which affirms that the priest has power to absolve seems less likely to be true than the doctrine which denies it.

Tell me that the priest must consecrate the bread

and the wine before the Church can have the Real Presence of Christ at the Lord's Supper, and then the Church must wait till the priest has pronounced the words of mystery and power. Tell me that wherever two or three are gathered together at the table of Christ, Christ is among them, and then there is no delay, either in His access to us, or our access to Him. Those who maintain the theory of Sacramentalism seem less likely to be in the right than those who reject it.

But here, too, we must remember that the truest and simplest doctrine may be made a fetich, an idol, and may come between the soul and Christ. If you think that any doctrine is so true and so simple that by its own "power" or "holiness" it will regenerate and save men, you will be separated from Christ as completely by the soundest belief as other men are by the most corrupt.

The truths which we have been considering should teach us all to be of good heart about the work which we call ours, but which is Christ's rather than ours. I appeal to ministers who are in the congregation to-night, and especially to you, my friend, whose ordination has brought us together. We are conscious—all of us—that we have little strength to do any noble service for God and for mankind. The consciousness deepens as we grow older. In our youth, perhaps, we had unmeasured hopes; we had not learnt the narrow limits of our powers; but the dis-

covery has come to us with increasing years. We still think that we know something of God ; but how dim our knowledge is ! We love Him, and we love Him better than when our work began ; but our love is very fitful, and even when most fervent it seems very cold. We try to speak for Him, but we speak with stammering lips. Ours is not the secret which some preachers have mastered, and by which they seem to have been able to charm great crowds of grown men and little children to live righteously and to rejoice in the love of God. We have neither the "power" nor the "holiness" to work any deliverance for our race.

It may be so ; but at least we may have faith in Christ ; and we may be driven to a simpler faith in Him by the discovery that there is absolutely no reason for having faith in ourselves. If we thought we had "power" we might trust in it ; if we thought we had "holiness" we might trust in it ; but if we have learnt that we have neither, what can we do but appeal to the mercy of Christ, who died for men, and to the power of Christ, who is able to give to men the very life of God ?

Neither our weakness nor our unworthiness is a reason for despondency. If we had to measure our own strength and earnestness against the difficulties of our work we might despair ; but our confidence is in the strength and in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. The results of our labour will transcend all that could be anticipated from the labour itself. This

kindles our enthusiasm, and is a motive for strenuous exertion. If we are only loyal to Christ, perfectly loyal, even *we* may do very much for the rescue of men from their sorrow and their sin, and for the triumph of the love and righteousness of God.

The true minister of Christ does not stand alone ; he is in alliance with Christ Himself ; this is the secret of the minister's power. Yes ; but he is also in alliance with his Church ; and this may be the source either of power or of weakness. I turn from my friend, who has been ordained to-day, to you the members of his congregation, and ask you, for your own sake, and for the sake of your minister, whom you are welcoming with such cordiality of affection and such generous hope, to remember that the success of his ministry depends as much upon *your* fidelity to Christ as on his own. You and he are henceforth confederate in one great work. Your prayers in solitary places will inspire his words to crowded congregations with Divine power ; cease to pray, and the power will be absent. Your silent but hearty concurrence in his appeals to men to forsake sin and to do the will of God will secure that mightier appeal of the Holy Spirit to the conscience and the heart, in response to which alone men submit to the authority of Christ, and trust in His infinite love ; if you listen without deep spiritual sympathy, without a keen solicitude for the conversion of men, the energy of the Divine Spirit will be withdrawn. Your personal integrity in the common duties of life, your

kindliness and charity, your earnestness in all good works, will be the most effective support of the ethical and spiritual teaching of your minister and the supreme proof of its power ; your personal inconsistencies will defeat all his exhortations to righteousness.

You remember the famous description of an orator. It was not his voice alone that spoke ; his eyes, his face, his hands, his feet—they were all eloquent. And a Church is a living body. The minister is its voice ; but, if he is to speak to any purpose, the voice must not come from a body struck with death, with fixed features, glassy eyes, and rigid limbs ; there would be something ghastly in *that*. Eyes, hands, face, feet, must all have life and passion in them, and must all speak ; they must share the sorrow and alarm with which the minister tells men of the infinite evil of sin, and the rapture with which he triumphs in the infinite love of God. Share his work and you will share his joy and his final reward. In every man rescued by his ministry from an irreligious life ; in every man who through his words finds in God strength for the exhausting, monotonous struggle with temptation, and consolation in the troubles by which our earthly condition is perplexed and saddened ; in every man who through his instruction, entreaty, and encouragement continues patiently in well-doing, and wins glory, honour, and immortality, you will see the answer to your own intercessions, and the triumph of your own earnestness and zeal.

IX.

THE GOSPEL FOR THE CHURCH.¹

IN our Lord's Sermon on the Mount—Matthew v. 45—He reminds us that God "maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust," and He tells us to cultivate the same universal charity that we may be the children of our Father who is in heaven. This is not the text on which I intend to preach this evening. I have read it because it introduces some things that I want to say about the religious thought of our time. The words on which I intend to preach I will read presently.

But this saying of our Lord's—"He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust"—is one of the great texts of modern preachers. I imagine that it would have done as well as any other for a large proportion of the sermons which were preached in England this morning, and which are being preached to-night. There is a fashion in religious thought as well as in

¹ Preached at Great Horton Lane Chapel, Bradford (Yorkshire), Sunday Evening, March 21, 1880.

most other things. In different generations different ideas secure ascendancy and exert supreme control over the religious thought and life of the Church.

People used to believe in Calvinism ; good, kindly, noble-hearted men used to believe in it ; and Calvinism taught that God does not love all men alike. When Calvinism was a living faith it had a great deal of beauty in it, and it had the strength of the granite rocks. But Calvinism is dead, and dead things soon become unlovely, hideous, and disgusting.

The reaction in this country is universal. Only here and there does a really strong man hold fast to the Calvinistic theology ; and we have come to think Calvinism quite incredible. The doctrine of original sin, as far as it asserted hereditary corruption, is indeed only another form of stating a moral theory which is regarded as a modern scientific discovery ; but the imputation of the guilt of Adam's sin to his descendants seems to us a monstrous and intolerable conception. Indeed the whole story of the origin of our race, as told in the early chapters of the Book of Genesis, is receiving an interpretation unfamiliar to the theologians of other days. And the other chief articles of the Calvinistic scheme—the doctrine that God has from eternity decreed that some men should be saved, leaving others, unpitied and unhelped, to drift to eternal destruction—that it was the elect, and the elect only, that Christ came to redeem, and for whom He died—these doctrines seem to us so contrary to

all that Christ has revealed concerning the Father, as well as so contrary to the native instincts of our moral life, that we are astonished that good men could ever have believed them.

This being the case, I wonder that it should be thought necessary to attack the old creed with any vehemence. There are errors and falsehoods enough in the actual belief of living men to task all our strength ; it is a waste of time to denounce a theology which was once crowned, sceptred, and enthroned, but whose power is quite broken, and whose life indeed has gone out of it. Like the rest of the world, I have given up Calvinism ; and twenty years ago, when it still had an arm vigorous enough to strike rather heavily any one that challenged its authority, I used to preach against it rather frequently and with hot energy ; but the time has come for considering the Idea which is now in the ascendant, and which fills as large a place in the minds of men to-day as Calvinism did in the period of its power.

This Idea, as it is popularly apprehended, seems to be the categorical denial of the great idea of Calvinism. Calvinism said God does not love all men alike. The rough—perhaps the inaccurate way—but still the popular way, of stating the modern gospel is that God *does* love all men alike. And the words I have just read from the Sermon on the Mount may be regarded as its motto, its battle-cry, the central article of its creed : “ He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just

and on the unjust." This is the popular truth concerning God; and man's chief duty is to become like God in universal charity. On these two propositions hang all the law and the prophets of the modern Gospel.

But when Christ spoke these words, did He really mean that we ought to love all men alike? I do not think He did. He said that we are to love our enemies and to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for them that treat us cruelly and unjustly, and that in this way we are to be like our Father in heaven; but that we ought to love all men alike is a very different matter.

Christ Himself did not love all men alike. A young man came to Him with the question, "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" The young man was frank, kindly, and upright; he had lived so blameless a life that he thought he had kept all the commandments. Mark tells us that, "Jesus beholding him loved him;" the heart of our Lord was drawn to him in a way in which it was not drawn to all men. Among His disciples our Lord had His personal friends. When Lazarus was ill his sisters sent a message to Christ: "He whom thou lovest is sick;"¹ and John tells us that "Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus." Even among the apostles there

¹ It would be pleasant to believe that Lazarus was the rich young man who shrank from selling all that he had and following Christ.

were some who seem to have been nearer to the heart of Christ than the rest, and John describes Himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." *Christ* did not love all men alike.

And can we seriously imagine that *we* are bound to love all men alike? Do you think that you would be more of a Christian if you loved a rough, brutal, profane neighbour, who beats his wife and swears at his children, as much as you love a generous, upright, kindly friend, who always cares more for others than he cares for himself? Do you think it would be a sign that you were growing in goodness if you never loved a man better for being good, and less for being bad? I do not. It would be a dismal, dead world if we ever came to that. And since when Christ tells us to love our enemies, to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for them that spitefully use us and persecute us, that we may be the children of our Father in heaven, who maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust—since, I say, Christ cannot mean by these words that *we* are to love all men alike, He does not mean that God loves all men alike.

God loves all men; but He loves some men more than others; this is a truth which we are in some danger of forgetting.

And now we are ready for the text of this evening's sermon. It is in our Lord's discourse to His disciples, delivered the night before He was crucified.

"The Father Himself loveth you, because ye have

loved Me and have believed that I came out from God."—JOHN xvi. 27.

This same truth our Lord states in other words earlier in this discourse: "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself unto him." "If a man love Me he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make our abode with him."

There was nothing new or strange in this declaration that God loves some men more than others. In the Psalms we are told that "the Lord loveth the righteous." The truth was at once grasped by the apostles; in the Epistles of the New Testament it is everywhere implied that God has a special love for those who are loyal to Christ and who keep His commandments. It is even said that "God loveth a cheerful giver;" and you remember the great words, "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth."

But, to return to our Lord's own statements. He tells us that love for Himself, obedience to His commandments, secures for men the special love of God.

It is true that God confers the common blessings of His hand without any regard for character; and these blessings are attributed by Christ, not to the operation of unconscious laws, but to the universal kindness of God. The sun shines, the rain falls, on the fields of those who break the Divine laws as well as on the fields of those who keep them. Health and strength

are God's gifts, and they are ours whether we pray for them or not, whether we thank God for them or not. God does not withdraw His gifts from men because they use them without any reverence for His authority. The brightest genius is unquenched, and the keenest wit, the richest humour, the profoundest sagacity, the most splendid eloquence, remain with a man, though he may use them to corrupt the morals and to destroy the faith of nations. And there is a real and tender love in God's heart for the very worst of men.

But there is love of another kind—a larger, deeper, intenser, and happier love—for those who are true to Christ, and who do His will. *We* love the friends of those who are dear to us—to the heart of God Christ is infinitely dear, and God loves Christ's friends. The words of the text were spoken to those who had shared with Christ the perils and conflicts of His earthly ministry. Their love and trust had solaced Him when He was wounded by scorn, hatred, and indifference. He turned aside from struggles with contentious scribes and malignant Pharisees to find rest and refreshment in the warm affection and steady confidence of Peter, James, and John, and the rest of the apostles. They had shared His work, and had preached the Gospel of the kingdom to tens of thousands of their fellow countrymen. They had risked everything in their devotion to Him; and He knew that, however their faith might falter during the awful hours which were now so near, they would soon regain their fidelity, that they would

remain loyal to Him through years of exhausting labour and cruel suffering, and that many of them would endure martyrdom in His service. I find nothing surprising in the assurance that the Father loved them because they had loved Him.

We have no such opportunities of rendering personal service to Christ as they had ; but our love for Him may be as ardent and as reverential as theirs ; we may be equally ready to obey Him at any cost ; we may regulate our lives, as they did, by His will ; we may accept it as our chief business in this world to promote His triumph over a race which is still largely in revolt against His authority. We may stand by the risen and glorified Christ as they stood by the earthly Christ ; we may be His friends as truly as the apostles were, and our love for Him may be equally effective in disposing us to keep His commandments. And if in our times and in our circumstances we are loyal to Christ, then we, too, may receive the words as addressed to ourselves—"The Father loveth you because ye have loved Me."

There was a time when Christian people believed that God loved them with a love closer and more intimate than that with which He loves other men ; the belief gave joy and sometimes rapture to their religious life, and it made them eager and fervent to persuade other men to repent of sin and to become loyal to Christ, that the same blessedness might be theirs.

But the thought of the Church swings like a pendulum from one extreme to another. There seems to be an incurable narrowness in the spiritual as well as in the intellectual and political life of men. We can think of only one thing at a time. In politics the tide of liberal conviction and enthusiasm rises so high at one time that timid people think that the banks of the river will give way and the whole country be flooded ; but within a few years it ebbs, and the channel is almost dry, and there are dreary miles of mud ; every vessel of any size is aground, and only the smallest craft can float. In speculative thought it is just the same. Thirty years ago the fashionable philosophy taught us that the spiritual intuitions of man are so keen and so clear, that we can know for ourselves, without a supernatural revelation, all we need to know about God, about duty, and about immortality. In those days we were all prophets, and the inspiration of the Most High rested upon us all. Now we are told that all the knowledge possible to us is confined within the narrow boundaries of the material universe ; that these barriers are fixed and eternal ; and that so far from any Divine inspiration being possible to us, our loftiest thinking and our noblest passion are mere functions of matter.

If in politics, if in speculation, we could only remember that our fathers and grandfathers were not all fools ; that the human intellect did not begin to be active ten, fifteen, or twenty years ago ; that while in what seemed to be the knowledge of the last genera-

tion there were some errors, there must have been a great deal of truth ; that the men who lived before us had the same air and sunlight, the same senses, and the same brains as ourselves—we should escape, both in politics and in speculative thought, many follies. And if we could remember that for eighteen hundred years there have been saintly men in the world, that they have read the same Bible that we are reading, have served the same God, have had the teaching of the same Spirit, and that in all probability they learned, long before we were born, many things very well worth knowing, we should escape many follies in religion which are fruitful in grave evils. I suppose that there has rarely been an age in which, through forgetting this, the theological thought of many Christian men has been so narrow, has covered so restricted a province of truth, as in our own.

I say again that Christian people used to believe that God has a special love for those who love Christ and keep His commandments. They used to believe it with all their heart. When I was a boy the Christian people among whom I lived believed it more or less, though even then the belief was beginning to wither, and very much of the life, the beauty, and the glory had gone out of it.

The favourite form in which they were accustomed to express their belief was derived rather from St. Paul than from Christ. It was their habit to insist on the truth—it is a truth—that the Church of Christ is

in some unique sense His possession, that it belongs to Him in a sense in which the race does not belong to Him. There seemed—so I used to think—a certain smug and selfish satisfaction in the manner in which some good men spoke of themselves as belonging to Christ. Occasionally there was something grotesque in their way of exulting in their special prerogatives. What they meant was right enough. The conviction which had taken possession of their hearts was true and just, and there were some to whom it was full of noble inspiration and guidance. But they expressed it oddly. I remember that it was a common thing to sing that hymn of Dr. Watts’s—

“We are a garden walled around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground;
A little spot enclosed by grace
Out of the world’s wide wilderness.

“Like trees of myrrh and spice we stand,
Planted by God the Father’s hand,
And all His springs in Sion flow
To make the young plantation grow.”

I venture to say that there is not one of you under thirty years of age that ever heard that hymn sung in your life. I wonder what would happen in this congregation if you were ever asked to sing it. But I remember when wise, cultivated, grey-headed men, who had quite as much intellectual vigour as you or I have, and as keen a sense of the ludicrous, used to sing that they were “a garden walled around,” and that they were like “trees of myrrh and spice,” and

that God made "His springs in Sion flow, To make the young plantation grow." Those of us who belonged to the younger generation—and I belonged to the younger generation once—went into revolt. We looked over the wall that ran round the garden and saw that there was a great and wonderful world outside. We said that it all belonged to God—and we were right. We said that the "trees of myrrh and spice" which were growing inside used to be outside, and that there was still a whole forest of trees outside which might become as fair in foliage and as beautiful in fruit as the elect trees which were now planted by the pleasant streams of the Church—and we were right. We said that the Good Shepherd thought of the sheep that were far off in the wilderness—that they, too, were "His," and that He wanted them back among the flock and in the fold; that instead of bleating for ever about their own privileges, the flock of Christ should think of the lost sheep, and should rejoice that Christ cared for them too; and I say again that we were right.¹

But I am afraid that if we remembered what our fathers had forgotten, some of us forget what our fathers had remembered. They may have made too

¹ Not that I think that the Evangelical Christians to whom this paragraph refers cared less for the salvation of irreligious and vicious men than we care. All their traditions made them eager to save the lost. Nor do I think it possible to exaggerate the difference between those who are on God's side and those who are not. But there are different ways of stating the difference.

much of the difference between those who are on God's side and those who are not, between those who love Christ and those who do not, between those who are saved and those who are not ; some of us, I am afraid, make too little. It is true that the unreclaimed waste belongs to God as well as the estate which has been brought under cultivation and enclosed within a ring fence ; and it is true that very much of the land outside the fence is naturally rich and lovely. There are dreary marshes, no doubt—undrained and unwholesome, the eternal home of ague and fever ; there are dense jungles where wild creatures live, some of them with terrible teeth and claws, and others with poisoned fangs ; but there is the primeval forest with magnificent trees, and there are vast prairies over which tens of thousands of splendid cattle are roaming, and in which they find unfailing pasture. There is a great deal that is beautiful and noble in the world outside the fence.

But still the Divine estate lies inside. It is there that the Divine thought is being fulfilled ; it is there that the Divine power is bringing human nature to its consummate perfection. The enclosed estate is in a special sense Christ's own ; and if men refuse to be brought under Divine cultivation, if they choose to live their own life, if they assert their independence, resist enclosure, it must in the long run go badly with them.

The lost sheep in the distant wilderness are Christ's. No doubt ! We were all lost sheep once. He came to seek and to save us when we were lost. But does it

make no difference whether we listen to His voice or not? follow Him or not? return to the flock and the fold or not? Those who finally refuse to return will be, in the most terrible sense, *lost* sheep—finally lost. They will cease to be His—will be beyond the reach of His protection and care; and while they refuse, it remains doubtful whether He will lose them ultimately or whether He will be able to save them. Only those who have returned are completely and for ever His own. He claims all; He desires to have the keeping of all; He desires to bless all with righteousness and eternal life and glory; He loved all well enough to die for all; but those who finally refuse to be His will finally cease to be His, and will miss the height of that joy and blessedness which He will confer upon those who acknowledge Him as the Lord of their life and the Giver of eternal redemption.

Our fathers were right. They, and they alone, are in the deepest sense of the words Christ's own who are His by virtue of their loyalty to His crown and their obedience to His laws. They are His own, because of their free and personal consent to His claims; they are His own, because they have received the very Life that dwells in Him, and because the power of His righteousness will be at last illustrated in their perfection. They are His own as the limbs of my body are *mine*; they are the instruments of His will, the organs of His thought—in their sufferings He is afflicted, in their reverses dishonoured, in their successes triumphant. They are His own as the

branches of the vine are its own : in its own branches, not in the branches of other trees, the life of the vine is revealed—in leaf and blossom and in heavy clusters of fruit. And so in those who are loyal to Christ there is the revelation of the life that dwells in Christ—in all that is beautiful in their spirit, in their joy, in their substantial deeds of righteousness. They are His own : comrades with Him in His prolonged conflict with evil ; the ministers of His pity in His prolonged conflict with suffering ; faithful in the supreme purpose of their hearts to that eternal law of righteousness which is eternally one with His own will. They are His own ; for in the stainless moral perfection to which they will rise when the infirmities of this mortal condition have passed away, in the endless growth of their wisdom, power, goodness, and blessedness, He will reap the rich harvest of all His sufferings. This was the joy set before Him when He endured the cross, despising the shame ; and for this He waits, now that He is seated at the right hand of God.

He *loves* all mankind ; it is His will that none should perish, but that all should achieve the perfection which is possible to all through Him ; but to those who respond to His mercy His own heart makes a warmer response ; He loves them the more for their love for Himself, and for the fidelity to righteousness with which He has inspired them.

This was the faith of our fathers ; would to God

it were ours! That we should hesitate to believe and to affirm that there is any unique relation between ourselves and Christ—a relation which is not shared by all men—is natural. It is, perhaps, still more natural for us to shrink from appropriating these wonderful words which speak of God's special love for those who love Christ and keep His commandments. Our love for Christ is faint and intermittent; our obedience to Him is vacillating and partial. But faith in Christ—the faith which is the condition of salvation—requires us to accept all Christ's words, and therefore requires us to believe that however inadequate our affection for Christ may be, God regards us with a love with which He would not regard us if we did not love Christ at all; and that, however imperfectly we keep Christ's commandments, God regards us with a love with which He would not regard us if we did not try to keep them. It is at the peril of our souls that we refuse to believe anything that Christ has revealed to us. His revelation is all of a piece. Reject any part of it, and we are in danger of losing the whole.

Our hesitation may seem to be the result of a wise humility. We may plead that there is nothing in our spirit or our character that can justify us in assuming that we are nearer to the heart of God than other men. But there is a humility which is akin to pride and self-assertion—a humility which makes men unwilling to receive the great blessings of God for Christ's sake rather than for their own. In

accepting, with wonder and thankfulness, the prerogatives and hopes which Christ declares to be the inheritance of all who are loyal to Him, there is the most absolute self-oblivion. This is true from the earliest movements of the Christian life to its ultimate consummation in eternal righteousness and blessedness. When we rely for the pardon of sin upon the infinite mercy of God revealed through Christ, we found no personal claim upon our faith, nor do we assume any moral superiority over those who refuse to believe. We are conscious of nothing but our sin, and it is our trouble and shame that our sorrow for sin is not keener, our determination to forsake it more resolute, our faith in the Divine mercy more steadfast ; but for Christ's sake we trust God to forgive us and to grant us strength to do His will. If because there is no agony in our repentance, we hesitate to believe that God will have mercy upon us, or if because our resolution to do better has no energy or passion in it, we think that humility requires us to refuse the solace and strength which would come to us from perfect trust in the Divine mercy, our hesitation is no proof of a wise humility but of an unwise self-confidence. It rests upon the secret conviction that the time will come when our sorrow for sin will be so intense, and our determination to do better so firm and vigorous, as to constitute in themselves a ground on which to rest our hope of obtaining the mercy of God. One of the great lessons we have to learn is to receive the forgiveness of sin for Christ's sake. And it is for

Christ's sake that God loves with a special love those who love Christ and who obey Christ's commandments. We dishonour Christ if we think that this is incredible.

To illustrate the power with which the faith for which I am contending inspires the religious life, would require me to tell the story of the victories and blessedness of innumerable saints. Those to whom this faith comes exclaim with happy surprise—

“How soon a smile of God can change the world !”

It makes the reality of the Christian redemption more vivid. Our escape from the sins and imperfections of a life remote from God is slow and gradual ; evil passions which we thought had been crushed, or at least chained, sometimes prove that their vicious energy is still to be feared. With the new circumstances of life new duties have to be discharged, and we sometimes discover that duties which looked simple and easy when they were in the distant future are really hard and difficult. We wonder whether, after all, any great change has passed upon us as the result of our faith in Christ. But when the words of Christ—“The Father Himself loveth you because ye have loved Me”—come home to us, when we have the courage to accept them, when they are illuminated by the power of the Spirit, and “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us,” new heavens shine above our heads, and there is a new earth at our feet. Then we know that

we have been delivered from this present evil world and have been translated into the kingdom of His dear Son. The immeasurable promises of Christ no longer wait for their fulfilment in remote and unknown conditions of existence, separated from us by the mystery of death: day after day we are more and more vividly conscious that we are restored to God, and the blessedness of heaven is already ours. Obedience is animated with a new joy, Hope begins to reap its golden harvests, and Faith is almost changed into sight.

At our first return to God we find it hard to believe that God loves us notwithstanding our sins. This is the Gospel for the world, and until we believe it the Christian life cannot begin. But there is a second Gospel, a GOSPEL FOR THE CHURCH—that God loves with a deeper and stronger love those who love Christ and keep His commandments ;—and until this second Gospel is received as heartily as we received the first, the Christian life can never reach the height of its power or the fulness of its joy.

X.

LOVE FOR CHRIST.¹ (I.)

I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.—ACTS xxi. 13.

PAUL'S immediate object in going to Jerusalem at this time was to come to some understanding with those Christian Jews who were "zealous for the law," and so to put an end to controversies which seemed likely to break up the churches which he had founded among the heathen. These controversies produced a bitterness and mutual hostility among Christian men which were a public scandal; they impaired the development of some of the nobler and more gracious forms of the Christian life; and they impeded the progress of Christian missions. To put an end to these troubles was Paul's immediate object, and to secure it he was willing to run any personal risks—"ready, not to be a prisoner only, but also to die."

But the way in which the apostle speaks of his readiness to meet the dangers which menaced him at

¹ Preached at Carr's Lane Chapel, Birmingham, on Sunday morning, January 18, 1880.

Jerusalem is characteristic of his temper and spirit. The antagonism of Jewish Christians who sheltered themselves under the authority of the Jerusalem Church had for many years been a cause of incessant trouble to him ; but he is not thinking so much of the relief to himself which would come from kindlier relations with his Jewish brethren as of Christ. His own anxieties and the thwarting of his own work are subordinate in Paul's mind to a loftier thought. It was Christ who was chiefly concerned in the evils of the schism. The churches which were being divided by it were Christ's churches : He had died for them. The work among the heathen which was being impeded was Christ's work : Paul was only His "slave," employed by Him to preach the Gospel to all mankind ; if the work was hindered, it was not the "slave" but the Master who was wronged. And so the apostle says that he is ready to become a prisoner and even to die "for the *name of the Lord Jesus.*"

Paul was on fire with love for Christ. A careful reading of his Epistles enables us to perceive that the passion became more fervent as his life went on, that it grew with his growing knowledge of Christ and with his labours and sufferings in Christ's service. It is far more intense in the Epistle to the Ephesians than in the Epistles to the Thessalonians. That cooling in the ardour of our "first love" for Christ, which some Christian people imagine to be inevitable, is not found in the life of Paul.

The love which Christ inspires is so perfectly unique that we should be glad if we had a special name for it. Human language is too poor to describe all the varieties of affection and sentiment of which the heart is capable. Love for children, love for parents, love for our brothers, love for our sisters, love for our friends — they are so unlike each other that they ought hardly to be called by the same name. Even our love for our friends is so differently coloured, is blended so variously with elements derived from varieties in their character, their age, and their external circumstances, that we almost want a separate name for the special affection with which we regard each of them. The love which we have for those who cling to our strength because they are weaker than we are, and rely on our judgment because they are surer of our judgment than of their own, is very different from that which we have for our equals; and this again is very different from our affection for those who are far above us in all the qualities which constitute greatness and nobleness of character, and whose regard for ourselves is a generous condescension. And the love which we ought to have for Christ is different from all other love—so different in many of its most vital and energetic elements that, as I have said, we should be glad to have a special name for it.

But my intention this morning is not to analyse our love for Christ, but to inquire how it becomes intense and vigorous. We may love Christ and yet

be conscious that our love has very little depth and energy, and one of the most urgent questions for many Christian men is that which I now propose to consider—*How is a great love for Christ created in a Christian heart?*

Perhaps the first answer to the question that will occur to some of us is that a great love for Christ is always created by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The answer is profoundly true ; our highest knowledge of Christ comes from the illumination of the Holy Spirit, and apart from the knowledge of Christ there can be no love for Him. And our very life—the life which expresses itself in love for Christ—is life which comes from the inspiration of the Spirit. He is perpetually making Christ better known to all devout hearts, and He is perpetually inspiring them with a more fervent love for Christ. The answer is profoundly true ; a great love for Christ is created by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

But the answer may be suggested by indolence. We may say that if we are to love Christ better, the love must come from the Spirit of God ; and that therefore there is nothing for us to do, and that we must let things take their course. If this is our temper we may be certain that this noble devotion will never be kindled in our souls. It is not by any magical process that the Divine Spirit achieves His great work for men ; we ourselves must take part with Him in it, and without our concurrence He will do nothing.

We have therefore to complete the answer. It is by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that we come to have a great love for Christ; but this inspiration is definitely connected with our own intellectual and moral activity. The work of the Spirit of God is no reason for indolence; it is the highest motive to strenuous effort. What have *we* to do that we may love Christ as Paul loved Him; or—if we are incapable of so large and deep and vehement a devotion—that we may at least love Him with all the strength that is possible to us?

Perhaps the second answer will be that we must learn from the four Gospels all that can be known of Christ. This answer falls in with one of the healthiest tendencies of modern religious thought. For the last thirty years or more there has been a growing neglect of the doctrinal subjects which so deeply interested our fathers. This neglect seems to me a serious evil; but there has also been an increasing interest in the earthly life of Christ. The extraordinary popularity of one or two recent lives of our Lord is an instructive illustration of the spirit which is just now governing the Church. It is a spirit akin to that which is also governing the world. The world has become weary of the great speculative questions which have occupied the profounder minds of all ages and of all countries, and has turned away to other inquiries—to the study of the external phenomena of the universe and the laws which they illustrate; to the study of the

history of nations and the history of human life and thought. The Church has become weary of the immense problems of theology, and has turned to the earthly life of Christ. It has resolved to make a fresh start and to begin once more at the beginning. And the story contained in the four Gospels is the enduring wonder and glory of the history of our race. The fascination of it is inexhaustible. What dignity, what grace, what strength, what gentleness, what righteousness, what mercy, what steadfast endurance, what pity and compassion, are blended in the character of the Lord Jesus Christ! In His teaching what heights of moral and spiritual perfection are proposed to saints—heights inaccessible without the strength of God! What hopes there are for those who are conscious of guilt and of a weakness that is unequal even to the humblest duties! Yes, it is an amazing story; and though it has been told over and over again in our own times, and has been illustrated by learning and by philosophical commentary, the charm of the original fourfold narrative remains unapproached and unapproachable.

But I should like to know whether many men have come to love Christ with a love at all like that of Paul through simply reading the four Gospels.

That is a question which my experience teaches me is sure to be misunderstood; for it is an almost irresistible impulse with many people to take a single sentence which strikes them, in a sermon or a speech, and to lift it quite out of its connection with all that

precedes and all that follows. Even with this protest, some of you will imagine that I have said that men do not come to love Christ through reading the Gospels. That is not what I have said, and it is not what I mean.

Suppose I put it in another way. It is quite possible to read the four Gospels a great deal and to feel their infinite charm ; it is possible for the heart to be drawn strongly to Christ by what the Gospels tell us about Him ; it is possible to recognise Him as God manifest in the flesh, and yet not to love Him with a love of the same quality as that which dwelt in the heart of Paul.

Has it ever occurred to you to ask whether, for you, the interest of Christ's history, like the interest of the history of ordinary men, closes with His death ? Is the mighty spell broken when He cries, " Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit " ? Would the story lose little or nothing of its power for some of us if we were not told of His victory over the grave and His ascension into heaven ? If so, the kind of devotion which He inspired in Paul is impossible to us. Christ may be to us the grandest, the fairest, the most glorious of historic characters. We may acknowledge Him as the crown and consummation of a supernatural history, the origin of a fresh and mighty movement in the religious thought and the religious life of mankind—a movement which has created for the conscience a new and nobler type of moral perfection, and for the imagination a new and nobler

ideal of spiritual power and beauty. We may ascribe to Him a unique influence over the fortunes of our race ; may find in His words and deeds, and in the sufferings of His last hours, the centre and spring of forces which have changed the face of the world, have built up great empires and given to Europe all the best elements of its civilisation. We may confess His absolute authority as the founder of a new and true religious faith ; may recognise the obligation of His laws, the truth of His teaching, the eternal steadfastness of His exceeding great and precious promises. We may believe in the reality of all His miracles. We may withhold from His sacred memory no affectionate reverence, no religious homage. We may believe that in Him the very life of God was expressed in a human character and a human history ; that He was the Eternal Word who was with the Father, and who has revealed the Father to mankind. But if He belongs to the remote Past, though He may rise like a lofty mountain above all inferior greatness—visible from afar, the glorious heights of His memory bright with eternal sunshine and touching the very heavens—while the mists and clouds and tempests of eighteen hundred years are rolling beneath ; if, I say, whatever majesty and divinity we ascribe to Him He belongs to the Past, then we cannot have the love for Him which has been the strength, the joy, and the perfection of saints. Our whole religious thought and the whole order of our religious affections will be different from theirs. Our religion will

be a noble kind of Theism, but it will not be the religion of Christ.

For it is possible to believe that in Christ God became man, and yet to think of this alliance between God's life and our own as temporary and transient—as beginning with the birth of Christ and ending with His death. Even on this hypothesis those brief years would be of infinite significance; they would reveal the greatness of human nature and prove that man is akin to God; they would also reveal the infinite love of God for the human race; all that Christ did and suffered would be the manifestation of the Divine thought and of the Divine heart, and would be the secure foundation of human faith.

But if the ties which during Christ's earthly life united the Divine and the human were dissolved at His death, then God was nearer to man while Christ was visibly present in the world than He ever was before, or than He has ever been since; and the awful, the infinite distance between God and ourselves remains what it was before Christ became man. Our religion, I repeat, becomes mere Theism—a Theism enriched by wonderful revelations, but Theism still; and that relationship between ourselves and God which Christ came to establish, and which is secured only as long as Christ unites in Himself the life of God and of man, disappears.

The resurrection of Christ is for the Church as great a fact as the incarnation. But for the resurrection the incarnation would have been a mere

passing wonder, a glory which shone for a time and was then withdrawn, a transient rift in the clouds through which the splendours of heaven suddenly broke to the joy and astonishment of mankind, but no permanent elevation of the human race to nobler and diviner levels of life. I think that there are some of us who forget that Christ is living still. Our thought seems to rest upon the assumption that God appeared for a time among men in the person of Christ, and that then Christ was re-absorbed into the infinite ocean of the Divine peace and lost in the infinite brightness of the Divine glory. Christ is a *memory* to us—a memory with which we would not part for a thousand worlds, but still a memory, and nothing more.

He was more than this to Paul. Paul declared that Christ was “alive.” In reminding the Corinthians of the Gospel which he preached when he was in Corinth, he says, I delivered to you, among the first things, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He *rose again* the third day according to the scripture, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve, and after that to five hundred brethren at once, and last of all to me also. If Christ be not *risen*, then is our preaching vain, and your faith also is vain.

To Paul the living Christ was very real ; for Christ had interfered more than once in his own history. The great revolution in his faith and character at his conversion was brought about by an immediate mani-

festation of Christ; and it was Christ who appeared to him in the temple and entrusted to him the apostleship to the Gentiles. But it was not merely at these exceptional times that Paul knew that Christ was "alive" and near to him. Read his Epistles, and it is impossible not to feel that for him the life and activity of Christ had not been arrested by the crucifixion, that he loved Christ as we love the living with whom we are in close and daily intercourse, not as we love the dead. The love was perpetually intensified not merely by dwelling on pathetic recollections of the Past, but by the fresh communion of the Present.

When Christ is thus known and thus loved, the story of His earthly life and the record of His earthly teaching have a new tenderness and power. They are part of the history of One to whom we were speaking an hour ago and who answered us; to whom we shall speak again presently; who is nearer to us than all our friends besides.

If by our modern attempts to make real and vivid the external scenery and circumstances of our Lord's earthly history, the mountains and the valleys of Galilee and Judæa, the waving corn which stretches for miles across Samaria, the ravine of the Jordan, the lake of Gennesareth, the costume, the creeds, and the manners of the people among whom He lived, the political and religious organisation of Judæa; if, I say, by our modern attempts to make all these real and vivid, the historical imagination is obtaining an ascendancy over faith, and we are coming to think of

Christ as a great Personage belonging to a remote country and a remote century, then we shall be incapable of that energy of love for Him which is the inspiration of Christian joy and the strength of Christian righteousness.

But I have not answered the question with which I began. Most of what I meant to say remains unsaid; we shall return to the subject next Sunday. This morning I have been able to say only one thing—to love Christ we must know that He is alive and is not merely a sacred and glorious memory.

XI.

LOVE FOR CHRIST.¹ (II.)

I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.—ACTS xxi. 13.

I RETURN this morning to the question we were considering last Sunday—How is a great love for Christ created in the Christian heart?

First of all, as I reminded you last Sunday, we must believe, we must know, that Christ has not merely a glorious place in the history of mankind, but that He is still “alive.” We must grasp the truth affirmed in the resurrection, that He is still the same Christ that delivered the Sermon on the Mount, raised the widow’s son, wept at the grave of Lazarus, called the fishermen of Galilee from their boats and their nets and lived with them as a friend, was betrayed by Judas, was crucified, was laid in Joseph’s sepulchre—the same though different, “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” It is not uncommon, I think, for

¹ Preached at Carr’s Lane Chapel, Birmingham, Sunday morning, January 25, 1880. I have added the principal part of a sermon on the same text preached on the following Sunday morning; the passages omitted were simply a recapitulation of lines of thought previously traversed.

Christian men to think of Him as if He had been re-absorbed into the infinite depths of the life of God. Or we think of Him as if He were altogether separated from us by the unknown differences which divide His present life from ours, as if He had passed away to remote worlds beyond our access, and were lost to the race of living men like the prophets of earlier centuries, like His own apostles, like the saints of later generations. It is a great discovery when we learn that He is "alive"—alive in a sense in which Paul and Peter and John are not alive. The discovery creates a new epoch in our religious history. For the dead we cherish a love which is blended with a pathos and sadness that have no place in our love for the living ; our love for Christ is softened with a unique pathos, for He, too, has died, and died for *us* ; but there is no sadness in it, for He is "alive" again, and is more intimately near to us than He ever was to the dearest of His earthly friends.

But we may believe and know that Christ is alive and yet think of Him with only wonder and reverence, or with only a faint affection, without any depth and energy in it. From the first moment, indeed, in which we acknowledge Him as our Prince, and trust in Him as our Saviour, we must love Him ; but I am not quite clear that love for Christ is always a very active element in the early religious life. It may be present and yet not conspicuous. It may have a certain force and yet not be supreme.

I speak with hesitation ; but I think that it often

happens that after men have begun in earnest to live for God, they are wholly occupied for many months, perhaps for some years, in thoughts and interests which relate to themselves and to other men. They are absorbed in the idea of that perfect righteousness which is now within their reach ; they are eager to "work" for the rescue of others from sin, and for their restoration to God.

I mean that we may be so hot and eager to make sure of the blessings which Christ has revealed, that we hurry past Christ in order to grasp them ; we think of *Him* a little, but we think most of *them* ; just as a starving man might think of the bread and meat which a friend has brought, and forget the friend who brought them ; just as a drowning man might think of his safety when lifted into the life-boat, and forget the gallant men whose daring and skill have saved him from the wreck ; or as an ardent student, excited by the teaching of some great master, and by the wide and splendid provinces of truth which have been suddenly disclosed to him, might forget the master by whose genius and labour all his joy has been inspired. I also mean that we may be so zealous in good works as to forget who it is for whom we are working. And if we do not think much of Christ, it is certain that we shall not love Him much.

We are brought to our senses at last, and it is my impression that very many of us are recalled to Christ and learn to love Him better through discovering, long after we have begun to serve Him, what the

Puritans and the leaders of the Evangelical Revival assumed was always discovered on the very threshold of the religious life. The death of Christ has no adequate place in the early religious thought of many of us ; but it was to the death of Christ that the apostles most frequently recurred to deepen the intensity of their devotion of Him, and it is generally of His death that they are speaking when their love for Him flames out into expressions of vehement passion.

As far as I have observed, there are comparatively few persons in these days who, at the beginning of their Christian life, have any keen sense of sin ; and apart from this, there can be no deep impression of the unique power of the death of Christ, through which we have remission of sin. I cannot stay to investigate the causes of this contrast between our modern religious life and the religious life of the last century : some of them are very obvious. When there has been gross sin, it requires a very slight knowledge of the law of righteousness to see that grave guilt has been incurred, and that the Divine pardon is sorely needed. But in the case of large numbers of Christian people in our times, there have been no serious violations of those moral laws which are sustained by the common opinion of society ; and it usually takes time for the conscience to become so developed as to apprehend the greatness of the sin that may be present in a life which, in the judgment of honourable men, is free from blame.

This development of conscience is, however, certain to come if we persist in the endeavour to obey the law of Christ faithfully. We shall then see that though there may be little or nothing in our conduct that men have a right to censure, there is an appalling alienation of heart from God. Perhaps we may begin to learn this from a reluctance to approach God in prayer ; perhaps we may begin to learn it from discovering that by no severity of self-discipline can we make the will of God the supreme law of conduct. We find that, though we are Christians, we are largely governed by personal ambition, or by a desire for wealth or reputation ; or that we are too wilful in our desire for usefulness ; and that there is not that complete surrender of our whole strength to God which He claims. It is not *God* whom we are serving in business, but ourselves or our family. It is not God whom we are serving in our homes, or even in our religious work. He is not first and last with us. His will checks us when we are in danger of doing what is positively wrong, but we do not put our hands to everything, with this as our chief thought—that we are to do it for Him. And yet this *ought* to be the great purpose and effort of our life ; and if it is not, there must be revolt in our heart against God unsubdued—and so at last the sense of sin comes to us.

And then the Divine forgiveness does not seem a matter of course, but something surprising and almost incredible, and we begin to see, as we never saw before, the infinite love and mercy of Christ in becoming a

sacrifice for our sins. Christ has always known what we are just beginning to discover, the deeply rooted antagonism of our hearts to God — He always felt the wickedness of it. He condemns it even more sternly than we condemn it ourselves. To Him, with His perfect love for the Father, this antagonism is appalling. He recoils from it ; yes, recoils from *it*, but not from us. It was this *sin* with which He identified Himself on the cross ; it was precisely this which in some mysterious way He made His own ; it was precisely on account of *this* that He endured the darkness and the terror which forced from Him the cry, “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? ” That God must forsake *us* is the conviction which is forced upon us when we learn, as we learn — sometimes many months, sometimes many years—after we have begun to live a Christian life, that there seems to be an invincible reluctance on our part to concede to God His true place as the Lord and Ruler of all the passions and forces and activities of our nature. He *must* forsake us, for this reluctance is an enduring act and habit of disobedience. There seems no hope for us ; we hate the reluctance, but we cannot overcome it ; and then we hear once more the agonising cry of our Lord, “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken Me,” and we can answer it. The answer springs from the depths of our own despair ; since He made Himself one with us, completely one, not only in the sorrows of our physical life, but in the sorrows and conflicts of our spiritual life, it was

this sin of ours which surrounded Him with the awful gloom, and He endured unimaginable suffering that the sin might be forgiven.

After this discovery has been made, every confession of sin and every prayer for pardon recalls to us afresh the infinite love of Christ in dying for us. He and He alone is the Propitiation for our sins. The unique bond between Him and us is created by precisely those elements in our life and character by which other men are repelled. In their love for us they forget our imperfections. Christ recognised not only our imperfections but our guilt, a guilt which we now feel to be intolerable ; and He did not shrink from so identifying Himself with us in our guilt as to lose for a time His consciousness of the presence and love of the Father. To this wonderful self-renunciation the heart responds as it responds to no other appeal. The supreme proof of Christ's love takes possession of the soul, and we begin to think more of Him than even of the blessings which He promises in this world, or the glory which He promises in the world to come.

The progress of the Christian life brings with it happier experiences than the discovery of guilt. Love for Christ, however inconstant and however feeble, has a place in Christian hearts from the very first ; and it grows. With its increasing strength we find it easier and more natural to do the will of God. Our transition into the Divine kingdom is verified ; we breathe a fresher air and live under clearer skies. The time

comes when we see that great breadths of our life which were once waste and wild are beginning to yield to the culture of a Divine hand. We have appealed to Christ for salvation, and we find that He is saving us.

Most of us, I suppose, are slow to acknowledge it. We are afraid of self-deception. We shrink from what seems like presumption. We are conscious that there is still so much moral and spiritual weakness in us, that we are inclined to believe that we are no better than when we began. Our moral and spiritual ideal has become loftier than it was, so that we seem as far as ever from being what we ought to be. And yet the conviction gradually grows upon us that we are changed men. We love Christ. We find a keener interest and a deeper joy in learning His commandments, and we know that we are keeping some of them more faithfully than in former years. There are heights above us still which look almost inaccessible, but we can look down and see that we have made considerable way from the low levels from which we started.

Then we receive—at first with great hesitation, then with increasing courage—those assurances which are represented by our Lord's memorable words, "The Father Himself loveth you because ye have loved Me." "If a man love Me he will keep My words, and My Father will love him, and We will come and make our abode with him." It is not on the words alone that we rest. They begin to translate themselves into our spiritual history. God's great love for us is "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost."

The love which is created by the discovery of the mystery and power of Christ's death as the Propitiation for sin is the answer of the individual heart to the Divine love for all mankind. Christ died for all—not more truly for those who keep His commandments than for those who break them ; not more truly for those who love Him than for those who are indifferent to Him. But when we learn, and have the courage and grace to believe, that God has a dearer love for those who love Christ and do His will, our love kindles afresh. It seems incredible that there should be anything in us which God can regard with a satisfaction that deepens His affection for us ; and yet we come to see that loyalty to Christ, however imperfect, does really draw the heart of Christ Himself nearer to us, and that, for Christ's sake, our obedience, however imperfect, to Christ's commands, gives us a larger place in the heart of the Father.

There is a blessedness in being forgiven for Christ's sake. There is a deeper blessedness in knowing that the Divine love for us is so generous that it finds in us something to approve as well as much to pardon. This new joy comes to us through Christ, and it adds a new quality to our love for Him. However intense it may have been before, there was a certain depression in it. It now becomes elastic and happy. Love for Christ has now a second source of inspiration. It originated in the knowledge of the love which Christ has for us, notwithstanding our sins ; it receives an immense accession of energy when we learn that He

loves us better because we are trying to keep His commandments, and that, for His sake, the Father Himself is beginning to regard us not merely with mercy but with approval.

We have not yet mastered Paul's secret.

While we are thinking of Christ's love for all men—His love in dying for all—we may know nothing of His love for us as individuals. We may think of Him as loving us because we belong to the world whose miseries and perils touched His pity and drew Him from heaven to the cross ; but the world is very large, and we are lost in the crowd. While we think of Him as loving us because we love Him and keep His commandments, we may still miss His separate and personal affection for us. Thank God, those who love Christ are a multitude which no man can number. Let us return to the great discourse delivered by our Lord the night before He suffered : "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me, and he that loveth Me will be loved of My Father, and I will love him ;"—but this is not all—"*and (I) will manifest Myself to him.*"

Paul was not merely one of a crowd that Christ loved. He knew of Christ's love for himself individually, and I think that this knowledge was necessary to create the kind of love with which he loved Christ. A similar knowledge is necessary to us if we are to be inspired with a similar devotion.

How this knowledge will reach us we cannot tell.

There are many ways in which we may come to Christ, and there are many ways in which Christ may come to us. It is for us to cherish a strong affection for Him, and to endeavour to keep His commandments with the utmost fidelity. We must leave it to Him to manifest Himself to us when He sees fit, and in the ways which seem to Him wisest and best.

Sometimes there is a momentary contact between a man and Christ at the very commencement of his Christian life—a contact as real and as startling as that which changed for ever the life of Paul when he was near the gates of Damascus. The memory of it remains, and it is looked back upon with wonder and thankfulness as the supreme moment of life; but I suppose that it seldom returns in the same form. The manifestation may have been necessary in order to change the current of life and to give vigour and intensity to the first acts of faith in Christ, but there was something abnormal in it. It anticipated love and obedience and made them easier. The manifestations we have a right to look for are the result of love and obedience, and are Christ's response to them.

These manifestations vary, as I have already suggested, with the different circumstances of men, with their different temperaments, and with their different characters; but, apart from those grave defects or grave calamities which too often impair the healthy and normal development of the higher life, I believe that if we love Christ and keep His commandments,

we may all expect to discover, sooner or later, the special love of Christ for ourselves of which I am speaking.

Some Christian men, as they look back upon their personal history, can recall decisive proofs that Christ has answered their prayers. The proofs are of a kind that exclude the possibility of doubt ; the most impressive and the most touching are probably those which belong to regions of life known only to Christ and themselves. Difficulties have been solved for them in ways which to themselves were unquestionably Divine ; they were as sure that the light which came to them shone from Christ as they are that the brightness which breaks through the clouds comes from the sun. Or they asked Christ to expel from them some evil spirit or temper which shamed them, which made them despise and hate themselves, but which they could only check and could not drive out, and, in answer to prayer, Christ expelled it. Or they asked for other forms of spiritual blessing—every one must tell the story for himself—and what they asked for was given. And just as a man might sit down over a packet of letters which he had received at intervals during many years from his father or mother—letters written to congratulate him on hearing of his honours and successes, or to express sympathy with him on hearing of his troubles, or to give advice in answer to a statement of his perplexities—and as he turned them over and recalled the circumstances in which they were written, might come to

realise more vividly than he had ever realised before the warmth, the intensity, the endurance of his father's or his mother's love for him—so the remembrance of the special proofs that Christ has heard and answered our prayers produces sometimes what may be described as a revolution in our thoughts about Him. The reality of His personal affection is suddenly brought home to us, and there are relations—shall I call them relations of mutual confidence?—established between Him and us the blessedness of which transcends all our hopes.

The discovery may come to us in other ways. I suppose that there are times when to some of us it is a great surprise that we are still doing the will of God. The years as they have come and gone have brought fresh and fresh proofs that antagonism to God had poisoned our very life. There has remained in our nature a huge, stubborn, inert mass, which offered invincible resistance to every effort to break it up, to crush, and to scatter it. Storms of moral indignation beat upon it, and when the storms were over we found that the rock was unshattered. It seemed to glow and to be lost for a time in the fires of a passing enthusiasm; but the fires sunk, and as they died down, it was still unmelted. We turned our thoughts away from it, and thought of the righteousness and the love of God and of our work and our immortal hopes, but when we were forced to look round, we saw that it remained just where it was. It was something more than a mass of stubborn material which we could not

remove or subdue; it was the stronghold of evil powers which were continually breaking out upon us and making havoc with all our better and nobler purposes.

Looking back upon our religious history, I suppose that there are some of us who feel very vividly that day after day, week after week, we were in far greater danger than we supposed at the time, and it is a surprise to us that faith has not been paralysed and the resolution to do the will of God overborne. That we have not apostatised from Christ altogether and made darkness our final choice rather than the light is wonderful. We are sure that we should have made that disastrous choice but for the infinite love of Christ, who has clung to us with a persistency and earnestness of affection which, when we began to serve Him, we never expected. His personal, individual care for us is the only explanation of the continued existence of our higher life. In Him, not in ourselves, we see the root of whatever constancy we have shown in God's service; and so we learn that there is in Christ not only a love for the world for which He died—not only a love for all who keep His commandments, but a love for ourselves individually—a love which must have had a depth, an energy, a tenderness in it—which fill us first with wonder, and then with an affection for Him, such as His love for all mankind and His love for all who are loyal to Him could not have inspired.

There is still another way in which our sense of the personal love of Christ is deepened as the years go on.

It is our habit from the very first to appeal to Him in all our perplexities and dangers, and to share with Him all our exceptional hopes and joys. We know that He is one with us in our endeavours to overcome sin and live righteously ; that He is our closest and most constant ally ; that in our severest conflicts He stands by us. We know that He has a large stake in the issue of every struggle. He does not merely *stand* by us ; He is our comrade, and it is in His strength, not in our own, that we win all our real victories. He is as near to us in the calm and sunny hours of life as in the darkness and the storm. He receives all our confidences ; He suggests all our fairest hopes ; and it is to Him that we look for the fulfilment of these hopes. Our visions of that perfect righteousness which we trust we shall achieve some day ; our ardent, perhaps our extravagant anticipations, of the service we may render to other men—visions and anticipations of which we can speak to no human friend—are shared with Him. In our disappointments and defeats it is still to Him that we turn for sympathy and relief.

This constant recurrence to Christ has a silent, reflex influence on our thoughts about Him. At first we *assume* that He is not troubled by these personal confidences ; but as time goes on we know it. There is a free and cordial response on His part to all our trust ; and just as our assurance of the love of a friend, who has been loyal and true to us for ten, for twenty, for

thirty years, is something very different from our assurance of the love of a friend whom we came to know for the first time a few months ago, so our assurance of the love of Christ for us grows with the lapse of time ; and there is a corresponding growth in our love for Him.

When this supreme discovery of Christ's love for us is once made, it remains. There may be times when the sky is clouded, but we know that the splendour of the sun has not been extinguished. We are conscious, in ways which human language cannot describe, that He is with us, and that our whole life is being inspired, invigorated, and made calm or glad by His presence and His power. We have no longer any envy of Peter or John. Martha and Mary received a blessing inferior to ours. Christ has made, not our house, but our very selves His home.

And then we read the four Gospels as it was impossible for us to read them when our religious life began. At that time, though the words were familiar to us, the truths and facts were, in a sense, new and strange. We used to read the Gospels in those days as we travel through some beautiful country when we first come to know it : the mountains are awful or majestic, the lakes are lovely, the streams, losing themselves under a tangle of foliage, and then flashing back the sunlight in the open meadows, are charming ; but this is all. But if, time after time, we have gone to the same country, climbed the hills, tracked the streams to

their fountains, wandered by the lakes, seen them white and pale under the light of the early morning, hushed and still under the shadows of the evening skies ; if we were there in youth, when life was all before us and our hopes were as wide and unmeasured as the views from the cairns on the top of the mountains, and our spirits as fresh and strong as the mountain winds ; if we were there with little children about us, some of whom are now in heaven ; if we go there again, when we are touching the meridian of our years ; then a thousand subtle and powerful and pathetic and happy associations are blended with every sight that meets the eye, and with every sound that falls upon the ear. And so it is with the four Gospels after we have tried for many years to serve Christ and have learnt the open secret of His love.

Parable after parable, miracle after miracle, promise after promise, is touched with the grace of sacred memories. On one page there are words which revealed to us a profound law of the spiritual life ; on another, words which disclosed to us a loftier ideal of practical righteousness ; on another, words which gave us strength and courage in times of great despondency ; on another, words which filled us in times of great trouble with a Divine peace. And they are all Christ's words. We sometimes tremble with joy as we read them. *They* are so dear, *He* is so dear, that speech fails us.

If Christ belonged to the Past only, precious as the

Gospels are, I should read them with a certain sadness. I read them now with perfect delight. It was expedient for us that He should go away ; for He has come again according to His word ; has come, not in weakness, not in sorrow, but in power and joy ; but with His pity as tender as ever for our weakness, His sympathy as keen as ever with all our vicissitudes of hope and of fear, of gladness and of grief ; and with a love for us like that which He felt for His elect friends who sat at His table or received Him as a guest.

He is our joy, our strength, and our glory. Whatever there is of devoutness in us, whatever of noble delight, whatever moral vigour, whatever trust in God, whatever knowledge of the mystery of this life, whatever hope of the life to come—we owe all to Christ ; and though we may be incapable of that passionate love for Him which made Paul so great, and though the limits of our powers may appoint us to humbler forms of service, we begin to know something of what was in Paul's heart when he said that he was ready not only to become a prisoner, but to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

XII.

THE MINISTRY OF ST. PAUL.¹

I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you. . . . Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. . . . And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace.—ACTS xx. 20-32.

PAUL'S farewell address to the elders of the Ephesian Church contains very much instruction for Christian ministers, and therefore it contains very much instruction for Christian Churches. For ministers are very largely what Churches make them. It is hard for the strongest man to resist the steady current of opinion and feeling among those with whom he is in close and constant association. If in some Churches the ministers have become priests, it has not been merely because of the lawless ambition of the ministers. The people first became negligent in the discharge of their duties and transferred to the ministers all spiritual responsibilities. Responsibility always carries power with it. Then the men who were discharging all religious functions were invested with official sanctity; the ministry became an

¹ Preached at Carr's Lane Chapel, Birmingham, Sunday morning, December, 28, 1879.

“order.” The next step was easy. Those who belonged to the sacred “order” were regarded as having a nearer access to God than the rest of the Church; and out of this monstrous and profane hypothesis all the claims of Sacerdotalism were rapidly developed.

It remains true in Churches which regard Sacerdotalism with abhorrence, that the people make their ministers, as the heathen make their gods, “in their own image.” Every minister was originally one of the “people,” and he brings with him into the ministry those ideas of the ministerial life which surrounded him in childhood and youth. It was partly because these ideas touched his imagination and attracted his heart that he gave himself to ministerial work. Very often, indeed, he discovers that the popular theory of the ministry—a theory which was once his own—is false, defective, or impracticable; but it is a long time before he can get quite free from it. And unless he is a man of vigorous originality of character, the conceptions of his position and functions which are floating in the minds of the people will always continue to exert a powerful influence on his own ideal of ministerial duty.

There is one quality on which St. Paul insists with strong emphasis as having characterised his own ministry, to which it would be well if the popular sentiment of all Christian Churches gave greater prominence. He tells his friends from Ephesus who met him at Miletus that he had “kept back nothing that was profitable” to them. He never considered what it would please them to hear; he told them every-

Accommodated

thing that it was well for them to know. He did not shrink from declaring to them "all the counsel of God."

Paul was not among the number of those who think that many things which are true are not safe ; that it is necessary to cajole men into faith and righteousness by concealing truth which might repel them. He was frank and open. He had faith in God, and in the truth which God had revealed. He did not imagine that men were to be made Christians, or that if they were already Christians they were to be made better Christians by concealing anything that he knew about God or the will of God. Of all the forms of presumption and unbelief which under fair disguises have wrought immeasurable mischief in the Church and the world, this seems to me one of the most fatal—that there are facts about God and about God's revelation which it is dangerous to let men know, and that men are more likely to trust God and to live a good life if they are left with their ignorance uninstructed and their mistakes uncorrected. Paul asserted that he was "clear from the blood of all men," because he had concealed nothing. There were some things, no doubt, in his oral teaching, as there were in his epistles, which were "hard to be understood," and which the ignorant and unstable perverted to their own destruction ; *that* was not his affair but theirs ; it was for him to declare the whole counsel of God.

In every age of the Church there have been strong

inducements to follow another course. When the Protestant Reformation began, good and wise men must have been sorely tempted to a policy of *reserve*. The religious faith of millions rested on the authority of the Roman Church and the Roman priesthood; to challenge the authority of the Church and the priests was to loosen the foundations of the religious belief of Christendom. If religious belief were destroyed, morality seemed likely to be destroyed with it, for religious belief invested the laws of morality with their strongest and most effective sanctions.

Gross as were the errors and corruptions which had found their way into the Church, they were inextricably interwoven with the most glorious truths, and it seemed impossible to remove the errors without endangering the truths. The authority which taught men to rely on the intercession of the Virgin and of the saints taught men to rely on the death of Christ for the forgiveness of sins. The authority which taught men to dread the fires of purgatory taught them to dread the last judgment. Practical and sagacious men might have reasonably argued that on the whole it was better to keep the truths, even if the errors must be kept with them, than to lose both. The errors—so it might have been urged—were not altogether mischievous. Superstitious fears were a useful check on violent passion and brutal vice; they might restrain some from evil courses who were not likely to be restrained by a purer faith. An undue reverence for the priests might draw some to the services of the Church

who would not be drawn by reverence for the invisible God. For many centuries the religious life of Christendom had been sheltered by the institutions which the Protestants were assailing with such fierceness. The beliefs which were impeached had not prevented men from achieving great moral nobleness and religious sanctity. Even if the institutions were corrupt and the beliefs erroneous, it would be well to use a little "management" in reforming them. In the assault of the Protestants there was no "policy." The whole movement betrayed a want of statesmanlike sagacity. To break up the Church was to plunge Europe into religious and social chaos.

If Luther and his comrades had listened to such arguments as these, the morals of Christendom would by this time have become so corrupt, and its faith so superstitious, that what would still have claimed to be the religion of Christ would have been an intolerable offence to God and to man ; and a more tremendous revolution than that of the sixteenth century would have been necessary to save Europe from atheism.

No doubt the Reformation was a catastrophe. It worked great evil as well as great good. It loosened in some countries, while it strengthened in others, the foundations of Morality and of Faith. There is plausibility, and more than plausibility, in the contention that the revolt of Germany in the sixteenth century against the authority of the Church prepared the way for the revolt of France in the eighteenth century against the authority of Christ. Even now we have

not escaped from the disturbing influence of the fierce storms which destroyed the power of the Papacy in northern Europe.

The catastrophe might surely have been averted if the wiser teachers of the Church had had the courage to expose error and to resist its growth in earlier generations. But there had always been reasons for silence—or at least for treating superstition tenderly. Superstition while it was growing seemed harmless; perhaps it seemed to deepen the religious earnestness of the people and to exert a wholesome influence on conduct. Even gross errors might seem nothing more than translations of the great verities of Faith into the rough and coarse idiom of popular thought. The tares and the wheat were growing together, and there seemed no possibility of removing any falsehood without tearing up by the roots some sacred truth. And so men were afraid to declare “all the counsel of God,” lest the authority of God should be impaired.

Do you suppose that we, in our days, are quite free from the cowardice, treachery, and unbelief of the good men who lived in the ages before the Reformation?

I have heard that some excellent persons are seriously afraid that the new translation of the Bible, which is being prepared by some eminent scholars, will give a great shock to the faith of “simple-minded Christians.” Well, if the faith of “simple-minded Christians” is disturbed, the responsibility lies with those ministers of religion who have always known that

both the Greek text, from which our English version of the New Testament was made, and the Hebrew text, from which our English version of the Old Testament was made, were imperfect ; and that, even with a perfect text, no translation can be faultless. If with this knowledge they have permitted their congregations to believe that every word of our English Bible is covered by the sanction of Inspiration, *they* are responsible for the error, and they will be responsible for any harm that comes when the error is discovered.

But there are people in our *congregations* who do not want to have their minds cleared of mistakes ; and ministers may be tempted to conceal the truth because some of their hearers do not wish to know it. Fierce as are the conflicts which now rage against the articles of the Evangelical creed, I should have no fear of the issue if the great mass of Evangelical Christians had a more courageous confidence in the cause which it is their distinction and glory to defend.

There are some truths which have become part of the very substance of our moral and religious life. We believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God ; “the brightness of the Father’s glory and the express image of His Person ;” the Creator and Sustainer of all things ; we believe that He died as a Sacrifice for the sins of men, and that “we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins ;” we believe that faith in Christ as the Lord of our life and our Saviour from sin and from eternal destruction is the

condition of the pardon of sin, and of that supernatural change which is described as the New Birth, without which a man cannot "see the kingdom of heaven;" we believe in the immortal righteousness and blessedness of those who are "in Christ," and in the awful future which menaces those who persist in revolt against His authority. These, and such as these, are the truths which have constituted the real strength of the Church in all countries and in all ages.

But unhappily there are many Evangelical Christians who are in a panic if any of the human definitions of these truths are impeached and condemned. When they see the fire catching "the wood, the hay, and the stubble," which have been built into the fair temple of Faith, they think that the gold, the silver, and the precious marbles will perish in the flames. Their faith in the truth of God seems no stronger than their faith in the theories of men. They shrink from every modification of the subordinate and subsidiary elements of their creed; they are afraid that if anything is touched, the whole structure will come down to the ground. They close their eyes to whatever threatens the least jot or tittle of their traditions. They protest against criticism. They are afraid of inquiry. They do not ask for "all the counsel of God," but only for as much of it as will confirm their traditional beliefs, and leave their minds undisturbed. They clamour against every man that is not of the same mind with themselves. They think it better to be quiet about whatever would lead good

Evangelical Christians to suppose that they have inherited any errors from their religious ancestors, or have been taught any errors by their living teachers.

They follow the same line in dealing with those who are in doubt. If a man begins to question any part of their system, they say that he is on the high road to infidelity. They insist that the whole must stand or fall together. If he cannot keep everything, he can keep nothing. Men take them at their word ; and, because the rising tide is sweeping away those parts of the Evangelical theology which are built on the sand, men conclude that none of it is built on the rock, and that the whole edifice will be soon destroyed.

The only remedy is to be found in a more courageous faith in Truth. Let Evangelical Christians be loyal to Him who is the Light as well as the Life of men ; let them remember that the Spirit whose presence and power they invoke, and upon whom they rely for the righteousness and joy of the Church and for the conversion of the world, is the Spirit of Truth, and that He has come to lead us into "all the Truth ;" let them desire to know "all the counsel of God," and then we need have no fear of the ultimate result of the troubles and perplexities through which we are now passing ; the victory of the Evangelical Faith would be assured.

When this address was delivered Paul's work in Ephesus was over. The tone of the address suggests that the Ephesian Church had relied very largely on

himself. The reliance was natural ; within limits it was justifiable ; but it was likely to be excessive. Now that they are to "see his face no more," he commends them "to God and to the word of His grace."

This reminds us of another quality which should distinguish the work of every minister of Christ, and which congregations should encourage and honour. The function of a minister of religion is to lead people to rely on God, not on himself. Whenever he comes between the people and God—whatever practical benefit may seem to arise from this assumption of an undue authority—he is in a false position, and he is doing permanent harm.

But in all Churches there is a craving, on the part of many of the people, for this illegitimate exercise of ministerial power. Romish priests discharge two functions ; sometimes the functions are discharged by different men. As confessors they absolve from sin ; as directors they assume the guidance of the spiritual life. Even in Protestant Churches, though confession to a priest and absolution by a priest are abhorred, there is sometimes a craving for "direction." That the counsel of a minister may occasionally be of service in practical as well as speculative difficulties is obvious ; but something more than counsel of this kind is desired. There is a readiness, a longing, to charge the minister with the responsibility of the conduct of the religious life. This disposition is the result of a want of moral and spiritual vigour ; if yielded to, it increases moral and spiritual weakness. It obstructs

the free development of conscience. It impairs faith in God.

When Christ was in the world, who would have dared to come between any of His apostles and Him? who would have dared to assume the "direction" of their religious life? There is equal presumption in coming between the humblest and most ignorant of Christian men and the Spirit of Christ, who now dwells with the Church. For when Christ was about to leave His disciples, He promised that another Comforter would come to them, whose presence would more than compensate for His own departure. The Spirit fulfils to us the function of which He was thinking as having been fulfilled by Himself when He said, "Those whom Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost." We are each of us in the Spirit's charge; our life is in His keeping. He is our Advocate, Patron, Protector; He stands by us through all the vicissitudes of our history; by His defence and inspiration He gives us not merely comfort, but security, wisdom, and strength. He loves us as Christ loved His friends. He is patient with our infirmities as Christ was patient with the infirmities of His friends. He is eager for our perfection. He rejoices in our victories. He is troubled by our defeats. He makes known to us the greatness and the goodness of God. He leads us into the path of righteousness. The priest, in absolving from sin, comes between the soul and Christ, who has taught us to appeal to Himself for forgiveness; the "spiritual

director," in assuming the control and guidance of the spiritual life, comes between the soul and the Spirit of Christ, who is the true "Director" of all who desire to do the will of God.

"I commend you to God and to the word of His grace;" this should be the reply of every Christian minister to those who seek from him what they should seek direct from God. I am afraid that I have sometimes repelled with what seemed unsympathetic hardness and severity the appeal for a guidance which I had no right to give. But hardness and severity are more wholesome than concession to cowardice and unbelief. The unreserved confidences of the soul should be kept for God, and to turn from Him to men of like passions with yourselves is to betray a want of faith in His infinite compassion and grace. He alone can "direct" your spiritual life aright. I decline to accept responsibilities which require a larger knowledge and a profounder wisdom than any man can possess. You are in God's hands ; I leave you there.

We have reached the last Sunday of another year. Before the year has quite passed away, I trust that every one of you will attempt an honest and earnest review of your moral and spiritual history since the year began. In that solemn inquiry—in that anticipation of the judgment to come—you will test your life by no inferior law, but by the will of God. You will not conduct the inquiry alone. A firmer hand

than that of any priest or "director," guided by a keener eye, will probe the secrets of your personal history—searching you, trying you, making clear to conscience sins and follies which conscience may not have condemned, but which have grieved the heart of God. Do not shrink from the discovery of your weakness and your guilt. It does not matter if the discovery brings with it humiliation and bitter self-reproach. One thing it cannot bring—the loss of the Divine love. Already God "knows all, yet loves us better than He knows."

XIII.

THE WORK OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY IN A PERIOD OF THEOLOGICAL DECAY AND RECON- STRUCTION.¹

GENTLEMEN,—If I were addressing you at the beginning of the Session it would be natural for me to speak of the noble pursuits which occupy you in this place. Men return to college at the end of the vacation with enthusiasm for their studies and with the resolution to work as they never worked before. If the vacation were over, and the college year were just beginning, I should try to strengthen this resolution, and to kindle more fiercely the fires of this enthusiasm.

But to-day you are filled with other thoughts. You are going home. The strain of the last nine months, which has been broken by only two or three brief intervals of rest, is now to be relaxed. If I am to have any chance of being listened to without impatience—I might, perhaps, say without resentment—

¹ An Address delivered to the students of Airedale College, Yorkshire, June 23, 1880.

I must remember that the Long Vacation has come, and that till the middle of September hard work is over.

Some few hours, perhaps, towards the end of the vacation might be usefully employed in the review of subjects with which you are already familiar. In your recent examinations you may have discovered that here and there your remembrance of work done during the Session is not so accurate and firm as it should be, and that some things you thought you had mastered have slipped quite away from you. There is no objection to your making a few necessary repairs in your knowledge. While the machinery is at rest you may straighten a bent rod, tighten a loose screw, replace a band that has been chafed and worn; but I recommend you not to light the fires, not to fill the boilers, not to set the machinery to work again, before next September. If you work as hard during vacation as I trust you have worked during the term, the vacation will be spent unwisely, and will fail to yield you its own characteristic profit.

But these pleasant months are not to be counted lost time. They may contribute elements of priceless value to the energy and effectiveness of your future ministry.

They should be so spent as to maintain and increase your physical vigour. In the exuberance and insolence of youthful health and strength most of us think that

our physical resources are inexhaustible, and that we can neglect with safety all those conditions of physical well-being which are enforced by the experience of many generations. I am not sure, indeed, that there is much use in talking to young men on the subject. We never quite believe that the laws of nature are inexorable till we begin to pay the penalty for defying them. When we pass forty we discover that the men who used to talk seriously to us on these matters were not all fools, and then we talk to younger men in the same strain, but to very little purpose ;—if I may judge from my own experience and observation, to no purpose at all. When they in their turn reach middle life, they will begin to think of our neglected counsels with the same respect that we have learnt to cherish for the counsels of our predecessors ; but then—for many of them—it will be too late. Noble powers sink into premature decay. The rich harvest of intellectual labour and spiritual discipline is suddenly destroyed just as the summer suns are touching it with golden splendour. Young men struggle painfully through years of perplexity and doubt, and when they are at last grasping with a firm hand the eternal verities of faith, they have to discharge the old debt incurred by their neglect at college, or during the early years of their ministry, of the simplest maxims for the preservation of healthy lungs, a regular pulse, and a vigorous brain. Or just as they have discovered how to preach, they find that they have been guilty, in past years, of a proflig-

gate waste of the physical energy without which it is impossible to preach at all. In many cases in which a minister does not break down altogether, there is a permanent loss of that elasticity, and of that fulness of physical vigour, which enable a man to work easily and always to do his best. Men work under a constant sense of depression. Half their time they cannot work at all. Sometimes they become irritable, impatient, wilful, wayward, through the unhealthy condition of the nerves and the brain; sometimes they become melancholy. They live under a grey sky. For them the radiance of life is quenched for ever.

There is something infinitely pathetic in all this; and if it were of any use to warn you against the generous excess of labour which is often the cause of the mischief, I would occupy the whole of this address in insisting on the importance of keeping yourselves in sound health. I should warn you especially against those habits of irregular work—days and nights of reckless and incessant labour, followed inevitably by days and nights of intellectual prostration—by which more mischief is done than by the severest labour when governed by method and by a moderate amount of prudence. But it would be of no avail. Practical truths of this order—to use an illustration which I have seen employed in relation to the great truths of the spiritual world—are like the stars; they have their appointed times at which to appear above the horizon. Their hour cannot be anticipated. The

misery is that for most of us they are like the stars for another reason—they begin to shine in the darkness, when our day's work is done.

But though I have no hope that those of you who have caught the glorious passion for intellectual struggle and triumph with which you ought to be inspired, will remember with any respect what I have said on this subject when you come back to college, eager and hungry for work, I have some hope that you will remember it during the vacation, and that you will be idle with a good conscience.

Some of you, I trust, will spend part of the summer on the cliffs and the sands, with the strong sea air giving new life to blood and brain ; some will find their way to the secret loveliness hidden among the hills of Cumberland and Westmoreland, and give God thanks for the beauty of wild flowers and the music of mountain streams ; you will climb the Langdale Pikes and Scawfell, or Snowdon and Cader Idris ; or you will see the gorgeous sunsets of the west coast of Scotland. And even if you do not travel so far, you will find among the cornfields and hedgerows a thousand forms of beauty to touch your fancy and to make your heart glad. You are of an age to feel the perfect charm of whatever is bright and graceful, of whatever is noble and majestic, in the material universe. Your vision will be less keen a few years hence, and your sensitiveness will be dulled. We are all poets in our youth, and life is incomplete unless we learn to love the mountains and the sea, the

clouds and the stars, trees and flowers, before the years of strenuous and anxious labour begin.

But there are other ways in which your vacation may carry on your discipline for your future work.

Here, every hour of the day has its appointed task—a task which must not be set aside or done imperfectly, even to secure opportunity for prolonged meditation on God and God's ways with men. Here, you can build no tabernacles on the Mount of Transfiguration; Moses and Elijah may be there, and you may see Christ in His glory, but almost as soon as the brightness begins to shine, you must come down to your common work. And, however large may be the time you set apart for religious thought and prayer—and I trust that every day you set apart some time, and a considerable time, for these great purposes—I suppose that you are conscious that the spiritual achievements which you long for are hardly possible within the brief limits which necessarily confine your ordinary hours of devotion. All men may not be alike; but there are some of us who want a long time to find our way to the remoter and diviner heights of spiritual thought and vision. We are not very alert. We ascend the hill slowly. We often miss the way. We have to make a path for ourselves. When once the path is made, the summit may be easily accessible; but till then the ascent is difficult. Vacations give you time for these prolonged and arduous efforts; and if the precious release from

ordinary duty is used wisely, every summer—not only during your student-life, but during your ministry—may bring you a clearer and more vivid discovery of some great truth, a fresh revelation of the glory of God's righteousness and love, a new and profounder knowledge of the mystery and grandeur of human nature and human destiny.

There is one set of topics to which I suppose most of us—ministers and students alike—are in the habit of returning, whenever a few weeks of leisure give us the opportunity of long and serious reflection ;—I mean the nature of our ministry ; the ends we have to secure ; the conditions of success ; the special circumstances of our time and country which give a special character and complexion to ministerial work ; the special circumstances of our own position, and the measure of our own resources, which must determine the kind of ministry possible to ourselves. On *some* of these topics it is obvious that every man must learn the truth for himself ; on none of them is it possible for one man's discoveries to release another from the necessity of independent thought. We must each of us grasp for ourselves the general idea of the Christian ministry, and we must each of us learn for ourselves the special way in which we are to fulfil it.

We are to be ministers of Churches as well as preachers to those who are outside all Churches ; and I venture to think that the intellectual and religious condition of the people who will listen to us every Sunday, should have at least as much weight in deter-

mining our conception of our work as the intellectual and religious condition of those who seldom attend worship and seldom listen to sermons. We may be sorry that we cannot reach them ; we may take measures to reach them ; sometimes we may actually reach them ; and there are some of us who always have to reckon on the presence of a few of them in our congregations. But it seems to be the suggestion of the plainest common sense that those who form the majority of our hearers should receive our first consideration. We may be keenly interested in Buddhism, and have a keen desire to convert the Buddhists ; we may think we see how to state the Gospel of Christ so as to make a great impression on them ; but to deliver sermons addressed to Buddhists to people in a Yorkshire village, who do not know of any difference between Sakya-Muni and Sardana-palus, would be a very preposterous way of trying to bring the world to Christ. We must preach to the people who are present to hear us.

Now what is the intellectual and religious condition of the members of our Churches, and of those members of our congregations who by their traditions and sympathies are most closely identified with our Churches ? It is plain that in some respects the condition of those who are already in the Church is severely adverse to a high and vigorous Christian life, and that the condition of those who have not yet entered the Church is equally adverse to religious

decision. I think, indeed, that some of the circumstances which are most adverse to us have their compensations, but we shall not discover or use these compensations unless we frankly recognise the difficulties.

It is for many reasons a grave misfortune for us that the great systems of theological truth which gave definite form and a robust discipline to the religious thought of other generations are sinking into decay. To many persons to whom you will have to preach every Sunday all religious truth seems to have become vague and indefinite, if not uncertain.

A hundred years ago, fifty years ago, thirty years ago, our fathers were in possession of exact definitions of all the great truths of the Christian Faith. Immense provinces of Christian doctrine were laid down in their theological schemes with all the definiteness and clearness of an Ordnance Survey. Everything was so completely settled that even children were taught catechisms in which the nature of the Atonement of Christ was explained in a few lines, and the doctrines of Original Sin, of Election, of Effectual Calling, of the Perseverance of the Saints, were defined and demonstrated as though the controversy on these mysterious subjects had been finally closed. When I was a boy I was taught catechisms of that sort, and I knew very much more at fourteen than I know now ; I was master of a compact set of arguments and of texts for confuting and crushing all who denied the great articles of the Calvinistic creed ; and

what was more, I had the most precise definitions by which to test the accuracy of the theological thought of the saints and theologians of all centuries and all Churches.

I suppose that men of my age—in England at least—were the last to receive instruction and discipline of that kind. The change was beginning even in the days of my boyhood, though I was happily beyond its reach—yes, I was *happily* beyond its reach. I am glad that I was not born twenty years later; for during the last twenty or thirty years people have come to suppose that they are giving children religious instruction when they are teaching them lists of the kings of Israel and Judah, or working with them at the map of Palestine, or reading descriptions of the countries of Asia Minor or the temple at Ephesus from Conybeare and Howson's *St. Paul*.

The earlier teaching was a logical and metaphysical discipline, and it conveyed a real knowledge of some great movements of theological speculation. In addition to its intellectual advantages, it conferred some great moral and spiritual benefits. Its theological definitions, even those of them which now seem to many of us most untenable, contained at least a partial account of transcendent facts in the life of man, and represented, however imperfectly, the highest relations of man to God. So long as they were accepted as true, the intellectual uncertainties which exhaust so much of our time and strength in these days were unknown; the sense of despondency

which these uncertainties create in some, and the indifference which they create in others, were also unknown. The minds of men being made up, and made up in their youth and early manhood, the large measure of truth which was contained in the theology which they had learnt in their catechisms, and which they heard from the pulpit, had its fair influence on their moral and spiritual life.

In those days it was possible for parents, and for schools connected with our Churches all over the kingdom, to use the catechisms which contained this rigorous theological teaching, because the authority of a majestic theological system, built up by the learning and genius of a succession of great theologians, was almost unimpaired. Its authority had been challenged elsewhere ; it was being challenged among ourselves ; but our fathers believed that its granite walls of logic and of proof-texts were built upon the eternal rock, and that the winds and storms of centuries would beat upon it in vain.

Since the theology of the Reformation was constructed—which was the theology of the Puritans and the theology of the early Evangelical Nonconformists—the intellect of Europe has passed through a vast revolution ; and as every system of Christian theology is an intellectual representation of the contents of the Christian faith, any considerable change in the intellectual condition of mankind must always be followed by theological changes of corresponding magnitude. It was a long time before we felt the

effect of the revolution, but we feel it now. The intellectual condition of our Churches varies; but, speaking broadly, the authority of the theological tradition is lost. The substance of the ancient faith remains, but people find it hard to give their faith a definite expression; and on many questions which seem to lie remote from the central truths of the Christian revelation there is the greatest indecision and uncertainty.

This state of things, with all its obvious perils, is not without its advantages for the Churches themselves, and for you who are to be the ministers of the Churches.

Half a century ago, and less than half a century ago, the authority of the Westminster Assembly's Catechism, of John Calvin, John Owen, Jonathan Edwards, was so great as practically to rival the authority of Christ Himself. The great masters of theology had discovered so much that there was nothing more for mankind to discover. They had systematised the teaching of Christ so admirably that it seemed easier to learn from them what He had taught than to learn it from Himself. They had been able—so it appeared—to give distinctness to His teaching where it was indistinct—to supply by inference and analogy large and vacant spaces of speculation on which He was silent—to bridge over by philosophy the chasms which made it difficult to pass from one great truth in the teaching of Christ to another. There were considerable numbers of men in our Churches who had some familiarity with the

writings of these illustrious theologians, and to whom the opinion of their elect authors was decisive. Among the rest of the people there was a theological tradition, partly derived from catechisms, partly from the elaborate doctrinal sermons which were common in those days, though very uncommon now; and this tradition, sustained by the practical unanimity of all with whom they had intimate religious fellowship, governed most ordinary Christian persons among us in their interpretation of the New Testament, and was the test by which they tried the discourses of their preachers.

All this has passed away. The power of the theological tradition is decaying; the illegitimate supremacy of great names has ceased. There is now no authority to come between *us*—to come between the *congregations* to which you and I have to minister—and Him who is the very truth of God. As we travel back through century after century to reach Him, our path lies among the ruined monuments of theological genius and learning, and we meet no authority to which our Churches are disposed to concede unmeasured submission until we find ourselves in the presence of Christ Himself and His original apostles.

The appeal is to Christ. Some other Churches, though sharing the general emancipation, are less free than ourselves. They are entangled by Articles, Confessions, and Standards of Faith, having a certain binding force which sometimes proves to be of a very perplexing kind. We are free, and we mean

to keep free. For all Christian Churches Christ is the supreme authority. For us there is no other authority. He stands alone. In the Congregational Churches of this country there is a home—not indeed for those to whom the claims of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Prince and Saviour of mankind are doubtful, who have no Gospel to preach, and who ought not to preach till they have one—but for all who are unable to find in any human system of doctrine, in the confessions and creeds of any Church, a satisfactory account of the transcendent manifestation of the love and righteousness of God.

Our position in relation to the ideal of the Christian character is analogous to our position in relation to the intellectual conception of Christian truth.

The inner life of saintliness in all Churches has a common root; and in all theologies that can be called Christian there are certain common truths—and these the greatest truths of all—which have been the inspiration and strength of all those who have overcome the world and dwelt in God. We are conscious of our kinship to the saints of all Churches and creeds. But the common life of the regenerate race has assumed forms as various as the common life of humanity. Every great theological system has originated its own type of Christian perfection. Just as differences of climate, of food, and of occupation affect the physical organisation of man, and contribute to form the different national types, so differences of creed affect the religious life of man and contribute to

form the different types of saintly character. The saints of Rome were largely the creation of the theology of Rome—of its errors as well as of its truths; and the Reformation was a revolt against the traditional conception of holiness as well as against the traditional system of doctrine. The saints that cover acres of canvas in Rome, in Florence, and in all the other cities of Italy, are as foreign to our conception of the perfect form of Christian sanctity as the definitions of the Council of Trent to our conception of the perfect form of Christian doctrine.

We Protestants have our own traditions of the idea of Christian holiness, and these were the product of the theology of Protestantism. In the English Church, books like Jeremy Taylor's "Holy Living" gradually acquired an authority in relation to conduct corresponding to that of the creeds in relation to belief. Among ourselves books like Rutherford's "Letters" and John Owen's "Spiritual Mindedness" acquired equal power. Innumerable treatises and innumerable sermons on practical religion diffused and perpetuated the tradition. The books—I am speaking of our own Churches—are, I believe, no longer read, and the unwritten tradition which they elaborated and defined is passing away with them.

Those of us who are in middle life have seen the tradition of the religious life and the tradition of doctrine melting away together. Thirty, twenty, years ago all Evangelical Christians shrank from the habits and practices which the tradition of conduct con-

demned, just as they shrank from the opinions which the tradition of doctrine condemned. To play at cards, or to dance, or to go to the theatre, or to get into an omnibus or a cab on Sunday, was as great a revolt against an unwritten but authoritative opinion as to reject the Calvinistic theory of original sin or the doctrine of eternal suffering. The tradition has vanished—or is rapidly vanishing. I am not discussing the legitimacy of the change, which must be obvious to all who know much about the life of Evangelical Christians ; I am stating facts which those of us who already sustain the responsibilities of the ministry and those of us who are anticipating them should recognise frankly. For good or evil the change has come.

Some of its disadvantages are incontestable. Many Christian people are perplexed. They are not clear whether the practices which the tradition condemned are lawful, or, if lawful, whether they are expedient. The rules which should govern the details of Christian conduct seem uncertain. There is indecision, there is a want of concentrated and sustained force in Christian character, corresponding to the doubt, the indecision, the want of concentrated and sustained energy of conviction in Christian thought.

But here, too, there are compensations. It is well that we should have no master but Christ. The conception of the Christian life which shone like a star before the imagination of the Romish saints had many admirable elements. But it was imperfect.

It not only failed to exhaust the true Christian ideal of perfection, it was corrupted by grave and pernicious errors. When the type became fixed, it was almost inevitable that men should attach as much importance to the outward and accidental signs of saintliness as to its inward spirit. The conception of saintliness which was authoritative among our Evangelical predecessors had also many admirable elements. But it was incomplete, and, as some of us think, it was positively impaired by false conceptions of the kingdom of God. The accidental expressions or guarantees of the unworldliness of spirit which was its lofty aim, were at last identified with the unworldly spirit itself. Our fathers avoided the theatre and the ball-room, partly because the grave earnestness of their character destroyed their taste for these amusements, and partly because they thought that these amusements were likely to lessen their earnestness. But the time came when their outward practice rather than their inward spirit became the law of Christian conduct, or—to put the case more fairly, perhaps—when the outward practice ceased to be regarded as holding a secondary position and was raised to the level of the inward spirit. The particular form in which a Divine idea was imperfectly fulfilled took equal rank with the Divine idea itself. It is a misfortune, no doubt, that with the decay of the tradition so many Christian people have become altogether uncertain about the true method of Christian living ; but any price is worth paying in order to deprive

human authority of the supremacy which belongs only to Christ.

For these reasons you will enter upon your ministry under conditions of exceptional advantage. You will find the minds and hearts and consciences of Christian people open to the complete revelation of God in Christ, not preoccupied with a system of theological doctrines in which some great truths are exaggerated and others suppressed—or with a theory of the Christian life, in which the virtues and graces which received accidental and exclusive honour from the circumstances of a past generation overshadow and conceal the forms of Christian perfection, which are native to the Church of every age. You and your congregations will be able to sit together at the feet of Christ and to listen to Him for yourselves, undistracted by the interpretations put upon His words by councils and synods, by fathers and schoolmen and doctors of the Church, by the great leaders of the reformations and revivals of these last centuries. In the whole movement of Christian thought and life during eighteen hundred years you will recognise, indeed, the presence of the Divine Spirit. Men of former generations have been loyal to Christ, have received the teaching of the Spirit of Christ, and have discovered very much of the mind of Christ; and they may assist you in your endeavours to take possession of all that Christ has made known concerning God and man. But for you and for your Churches—such is the happy temper of our times—there is no saint who has exhausted the Chris-

tian idea of sanctity, there is no theologian who has made the final discoveries which are possible in any region of Christian truth.

Your position, as I have said, will be one of exceptional advantage: it will also be a position of exceptional difficulty. You will break down altogether if you are deficient in industry, in courage, or in faith. When the scheme of the Westminster Assembly and the Savoy Conference was practically supposed to be the final answer to the great questions of theological inquiry the task of the minister of a Congregational Church was comparatively simple. Definitions of every doctrine were under his hand—accessible at any moment. The substance of his sermons was found for him. He was travelling in a country in which the roads were all made, and in which it was impossible for him to go wrong. The Calvinistic and Arminian controversy, which never slept, did not greatly disturb him. When he had once taken sides there was no further trouble. Every perplexity attaching to each theory had its recognised solution; every difficulty had been bridged over for him by skilful theological engineers whose work looked too sound and good to be distrusted. He moved from point to point as mechanically as you travel from Bradford to London: there are rival lines, but when you have chosen your route the rest of your journey follows as a matter of course; every one knows what towns you will pass through on the road and at what terminus you will arrive when your journey is done.

For you the work of preaching will not be so easy. You have to do over again for your own generation what has been accomplished for one great period in the history of the Church after another by the men who have created new epochs of Christian life and thought. You have to ascend for yourselves—and to assist your people to ascend—to that eternal revelation which has been the origin of all the transient theologies of Christendom. You have to re-examine that wonderful teaching and that unique life of which every theory of Christian doctrine is an incomplete account, and you have to give a fresh account for yourselves. You have to restore the authority of those laws of life and conduct which have been imperfectly and variously illustrated in the moral and spiritual excellence of successive generations; and, breaking through the traditions of the noblest as well as of the meanest centuries, to receive those laws afresh from the lips of God.

To do the vast work of reconstruction which must be carried through before the Church can reach new heights of faith and righteousness and enter upon a fresh period of orderly and harmonious development, is the task of men of great genius, immense learning, and with those keen spiritual intuitions which are the prerogative of those elect souls that occupy the thrones of Christian thought and control the Christian life of whole nations.¹ But each man must do his best.

¹ For the orderly and harmonious development of the life and energy of the Church, faith must find a satisfactory intellectual

And in every revolution like that through which we are now passing, the final issue and settlement has been prepared by the patience, the loyalty, and the faith of innumerable men whose names have no place in the history of the movement, but apart from whose fidelity the famous founders of the new Christian order would have been unequal to the tasks which have won for them eternal renown.

In an address like this you will not suppose that I shall be so presumptuous as to anticipate any of the results which you will reach by that free and reverent investigation to which the present circumstances of our Churches call you. But as I have spoken of the decay of two traditions—the tradition of doctrine and

expression. The great periods of growth and organisation are those in which this satisfactory intellectual expression of spiritual truth has been reached. The mischief is that when any really great theological system has for a long time met the necessities of the intellectual and spiritual life of the Church, its authority becomes excessive. What at the best can be only a provisional statement of the contents of the Christian revelation is regarded as final, and the schemes of theologians come between the Church and Christ. Then the hour for revolution has come. But periods of revolution are disastrous when most necessary. There are “compensations”—immense “compensations”—in our present transitional condition, but the disadvantages of it are very severe. A large, strong, and generous theology, widely accepted, but holding its true secondary position, leaving the soul free access to Christ, and insisting urgently on Christ’s supremacy, would be more favourable to the spiritual life than the present chaotic condition of theological thought. But anything is better than to be under the power of a theology, however noble, that practically asserts an authority rivalling the authority of Christ Himself.

the tradition of conduct—I may venture to remind you that whatever seems to be lost by the disappearance of either tradition, is to be recovered in Christ. You have to appeal to Him for the law of conduct as well as for the substance of faith ; and if you appeal to Him frankly, the results will, perhaps, be surprising.

In the order of time Christ seems to have asserted His authority over conduct before He discharged His function as a Teacher of Truth. He began with the proclamation of a Divine kingdom. The Jewish race—instructed by a long succession of prophecies, were waiting—not for a fresh Teacher, not for a new Priesthood, not for a nobler temple, a more sacred altar, a more august sacrifice—but for a king and a kingdom. The form which their hopes had assumed was very gross, but it could not have been wholly wrong. There was a real solid foundation supporting their unspiritual expectations. And Christ declared that the substance of their hopes was at last to be actually fulfilled. He was not the kind of king they wanted, but it is clear that He came not merely to teach but to rule mankind ; and His authority is assumed throughout His ministry.

There is a certain regal tone in His teaching which distinguishes it both from the teaching of the ancient prophets and from the teaching of the apostles. The contents of the Sermon on the Mount are to me as strong a proof that Christ was Divine as the most explicit declarations of the fourth Gospel. The per-

sonal authority assumed in that great discourse could belong to none but the Son of God. In His promises there is implicitly asserted a regal ownership of all celestial wealth, and a regal control over all the forces of the spiritual world. His miracles—prompted by His compassion for the miseries of our race—are the revelation of that supreme power over the material universe which is the fitting, I might say the indispensable attribute, of the supreme authority over the moral and spiritual life of the race.

Christian doctrine on the person of Christ is the justification of the supremacy which Christ assumed for Himself, and which His apostles asserted for Him, over human conduct; and the Christian doctrine of salvation is, in great part, a discovery of that Divine grace and of those Divine resources which render it possible for the laws of the kingdom which Christ has founded to be fulfilled in the actual lives of men. To take a single illustration of what I mean—the Sermon on the Mount contains an ideal conception of character which can never be realised except in the power of that life which is given to us in regeneration and which is sustained by the permanent indwelling of the Spirit of God in all the regenerate. The third chapter of John's Gospel and the fifth chapter of Matthew's Gospel are organically one. To human infirmity and frailty the righteousness which Christ demands in His sermon to the people of Galilee is inaccessible; but when He speaks of the supernatural life to the Rabbi in Jerusalem,

all things are possible. If we have no higher type of perfection to strive after in this world than that which is required by the common morality of mankind, the supernatural life which is conferred in regeneration is unnecessary—or at least it is premature, and will have no opportunity of revealing its energy and glory until we reach the wider spaces and enter into the grander moral relationships of the eternal future; but the immense demands of the Sermon on the Mount explain the present necessity of the new birth. Impoverish the supernatural elements of Christian doctrine and you impoverish the conception of Christian righteousness; surrender the characteristic ideal of Christian righteousness and you will have no moral motive for retaining the characteristic elements of Christian doctrine.

In any satisfactory account of the revelation of Christ His authority over conduct must have an equal place with His doctrinal teaching; and if this were the time for criticising the Evangelical movement in which our ecclesiastical ancestors were involved, and which they did so much to promote, I think I could show that one source of its weakness consisted in its inadequate representation of the idea of the supernatural in relation to life and morals. The supernatural in doctrine was grasped firmly by the leaders of the Protestant Reformation, by the Puritans, and by the leaders of the Evangelical Revival. The faith and enthusiasm with which they preached, what we summarily describe as the doctrines of grace, rescued the Church from

paralysis ; but with the return of life and vigour there were no adequate achievements to be attempted. The conception of human righteousness received a new development at the time of the Reformation, but not a development corresponding to that which was given to the conception of the prerogatives and powers which are our inheritance in Christ. The commandment was not broadened with the promise. Nor did the Evangelical Revival complete the ethical development which the Reformation had only begun.

That was a lofty and sublime idea of which the power of the Roman Church in the middle ages was the grand, though false, expression. The kingdoms of this world were the kingdoms of our Lord Jesus Christ. His representative on earth—the living, visible administrator of His authority—stood supreme over all human governments, consecrated the crowns of kings, was the arbitrator of their contests, rebuked their crimes, restrained their ambition, taught them to care for the neglected, to instruct the ignorant, to do justice and to love mercy, to listen to the cry of the oppressed, and break in pieces the oppressor. To the laws of the Church mere secular laws gave way ; for the Church was the visible witness to a Divine order, and this order covered all the provinces of the life of man. Learning was under its control, and science, and all the common pursuits of men. It gave to the soldier and the magistrate, to the merchant and the artist, to princes and to beggars, a law of conduct, a clear and fixed conception of how

their days on earth were to be spent, so that they might fulfil in various ways the Christian idea of life and win eternal blessedness. The trade guilds were under the protection of the Church as well as the monasteries; cloth-workers and workers in gold, masons and carpenters invoked the benediction of the priest; and the cattle and the fields of the farmer received priestly consecration. The Church claimed all things as its own; and when it placed the statue of Peter on the column of Trajan, used the Pantheon for Christian worship, tore away costly marbles from heathen temples and palaces to enrich Christian churches, it was but asserting its right to appropriate all the fairest and most precious triumphs of human genius to the service of the supreme Lord. This was the magnificent conception which to devout and lofty minds was visibly expressed in the power and splendour of the Papacy in its best days; we have to recover the conception, and to fulfil it more faithfully and more nobly.

The Church—or rather, the rulers of the Church—usurped the authority of Christ, and claimed for themselves the wealth that belongs to Him. You and I have to rescue the truth which Rome perverted, to remind men that “the earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof;”—its coal, its iron, and its copper, its silver and its gold, its cornfields and cotton-fields, its sheep and its cattle, its winds and its tides, all are His. An old preacher told his congregation that private property was the invention of the devil: this

speculation raises large questions which it would not be profitable, even if it were possible, to discuss just now. The institutions of property will vary in different countries and in different periods of civilisation, and the limitations of ownership as between the individual and the community must be determined by some considerations of which the economist and the statesman are the only competent judges. But in the light of the four Gospels, and of the whole contents of the Christian revelation, the conception of property receives a new interpretation. Ownership in any absolute sense can be claimed neither by individual men nor by communities. Nothing can be ours, for everything is Christ's. His claim extends beyond mere material things; unless we reduce to the level of an exaggerated rhetoric the teaching of Christ Himself and of His apostles, there is no muscle of the body, no faculty of the mind, no original force, no acquired learning or skill, that we have a right to use for our personal ends. Christ has the disposal of them all; for we—we ourselves—are not our own; and as the cross, the symbol of the basest ignominy, has become in Christian lands the symbol of the highest sanctity and glory, so the title which stripped men of all honour and excluded them from the simplest natural rights has become in the Christian Church a Divine distinction:—an apostle was accustomed to describe himself as “the slave of Christ,” and we, I trust, have learnt that this slavery is perfect freedom.

Consider how this affects the idea of property and of secular business. I have sometimes defined wealth as that which enables and requires us to work for others without being paid for our work. This, in the sphere of ethics, seems to be the true account of wealth. There is a vast amount of service to be rendered to mankind lying outside the profession of the physician and the lawyer, outside the occupation of the manufacturer, the tradesman, and the mechanic—service the money value of which cannot be accurately estimated, and which has to be rendered under conditions which make exact remuneration in money impossible. And, ethically, the only difference between the wealthy man and the poor man seems to be this—that the poor man receives his wages at the end of the week, and does not get them unless his work is done; while the wealthy man receives his wages first, and is bound, as a matter of honour, to earn them afterwards. A wealthy man who declines the work while retaining and enjoying the wages is as dishonest as the carpenter or the plumber who takes money for work he has not done.

This principle, which to the temper of much of our modern life may seem the poetry and romance of morals, was stated a few weeks ago in brief and emphatic terms by the least poetical and romantic of English statesmen—I mean Lord Derby. In explaining to an audience—I think, in Lancashire—why he had consented to deliver an address on education, he referred to his release from official political work,

which left him at leisure, and said, "*But a man is bound to do something for his keep.*"

That is the true ethical conception of wealth. Wealth does not release a man from the obligation to work ; it enables him to do unpaid work for society—it requires him to do it. The religious idea includes and exalts the ethical idea, adds to it a new and infinite element, invests it with new and infinite sanctions. But I wonder whether the idea is apprehended by most Christian people. Do they understand that the wealth which releases them from the obligation to follow a trade or profession does not release them from the obligation to labour ; that their time and strength belong to Christ, and that, as His servants, they have to do unpaid work for Him and for mankind ?

And secular business is business which we have to carry on as Christ's "slaves." But is it plain to all merchants and manufacturers and tradesmen that when they speak of becoming Christ's servants the words have their complete and natural meaning, and that they cease to be their own masters ; that their business becomes His instead of theirs ; that they are agents, not principals ; that their profits are all His ? Is it plain to all who are in the employment of others that when they speak of becoming the servants of Christ, the words really mean that they have a new Master ; that whatever they do, they must do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men ; that their quarterly salary and their weekly wages are not their

final remuneration for labour, but rather an allowance to enable them to continue their labour, and that from the Lord they will receive the reward of the inheritance, for they serve the Lord Christ?

I do not ask whether this idea of the Christian life is actually achieved by any large number of Christian people, and on a conspicuous scale, but whether it is the common law and aim of the vast majority of those who profess to be Christians. Is it understood by those who reject the Christian faith that this sovereignty of Christ is the real issue of the controversy between Faith and Unbelief? Is it understood by those whom we entreat to trust in Christ as their Saviour that the trust involves the recognition of His authority as their Prince? Is it understood by the ordinary members of our Churches that the surrender of all things to Christ that we may find all things in Him, is the fundamental condition, the living root, of Christian righteousness?

Do you and I understand as we should, that the vindication of this authority, this ownership, this unlimited supremacy of Christ over human life, the illustration of its consequences in relation to the details of character and conduct, to the home, the school, the shop, the counting-house, the mill, the town council, the political life of the nation, is our work as the ministers of Christ—that this transcendent claim gives practical urgency to all our expositions of Christian doctrine, to all our explanations of the promises as well as of the precepts of Christ?

I may be told that the fearless and consistent working out of this idea would revolutionise society and the nation. Of course it would. The Christian faith is confessedly revolutionary. It claims the kingdoms of this world as the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. "Behold, I make all things new" is the brief description of the work of Christ through all the Christian centuries; and its result will be the new heavens and the new earth of prophetic vision, wherein righteousness will dwell.

I have been betrayed into a violation of the limits within which I said this address must be restrained; I have been describing the idea and aim of the Christian ministry instead of leaving you to think about it for yourselves during the quiet fruitful weeks of the vacation; but it seemed necessary to offer an incidental justification of what I said concerning the exceptional advantages which attend your ministry in consequence of that decay of the tradition of doctrine and of conduct which on reasonable grounds occasions grave and painful anxiety to many good and earnest men. You are left alone with Christ. You have to learn from Him the real contents of that Gospel which you have to preach and the ends which are to be secured by preaching it. At its noblest times, through eighteen centuries, the Christian Church has sat at Christ's feet and listened to His words as you should listen now; and to every fresh generation that has listened to them the words of Christ have seemed more wonderful than they ever

seemed before. In deserts, in the cells of monasteries, in prison dungeons, in the solitudes of scholarly seclusion, theologians, reformers, martyrs have listened, and catching some fragment of Christ's meaning, have come forth and renewed the life of Churches and of nations. For you there is now the same high communion; it is forced upon you by the circumstances of your times; and I trust that before you return to these walls to begin your winter's work, every one of you will have been taught something by the Master of all the ages; from Him comes the light that lighteth every man, but He gives His deepest and mightiest teaching to those who recognise His Divine glory shining through His earthly humiliation, and who know that as in Him the weakness and limitations of the nature of man became the inheritance of God, so in Him the strength and glory of God become the inheritance of man.

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